This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

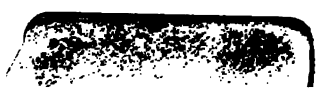
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Gift of
Harris DeHaven Connick
and
Edythe Russ Connick

Stanford University Libraries



THE WORKS

OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

LIMITED EDITION

II.

THE NABOB

VOL. II.

Of the LIMITED EDITION of Alphonse Daudet one thousand copies have been printed for America.

This copy is Number 391

Copyright 1898, by Little, Brown & Co.

Goupil & Cie Paris

Copyright 1898 by Little, Brown & Co.

Goupil & Cie Paris

THE WORKS OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

THE NABOB

TRANSLATED BY

GEORGE BURNHAM IVES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

ILLUSTRATED BY L. ROSSI

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1898

Copyright, 1898,
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

All rights reserved.

University Press:
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

CONTENTS.

		Page
XIII.	A Day of Spleen	1
XIV.	The Exhibition	20
XV.	Memoirs of a Clerk.—In the Reception-Room	42
XVI.	A Public Man	57
XVII.	The Apparition	86
XVIII.	The Jenkins Pearls	107
XIX.	The Obsequies	135
XX.	Baroness Hemerlingue	163
XXI.	The Sitting	194
XXII.	Parisian Dramas	230
XXIII.	Memoirs of a Clerk.—Last Sheets	255
XXIV.	At Bordighera	267
XXV.	The First Night of "Révolte"	287

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

VOLUME TWO.

Photogravured by Goupil & Co., Paris, from Drawings by Lucius Rossi.

The Duc, the Duchesse, and the Doctor . . *Frontispiece*

"The famous dancer's figure stood out all white" . . 15

"'Don't be afraid. I have no evil designs on you'". 152

"He holds her, holds her fast" 251

"The First Night of 'Révolte'" 287

THE NABOB.

XIII.

A DAY OF SPLEEN.

FIVE o'clock in the afternoon. Rain ever since the morning, a gray sky, so low that one can touch it with one's umbrella, dirty weather, puddles, mud, nothing but mud, in thick pools, in gleaming streaks along the edge of the sidewalks, driven back in vain by automatic sweepers, sweepers with handkerchiefs tied over their heads, and carted away on enormous tumbrils which carry it slowly and in triumph through the streets toward Montreuil; removed and ever reappearing, oozing between the pavements, splashing carriage panels, horses' breasts, the clothing of the passers-by, soiling windows, thresholds, shop-fronts, until one would think that all Paris was about to plunge in and disappear beneath that depressing expanse of miry earth in which all things are jumbled together and lose their identity. And it is a pitiable thing to see how that filth invades the spotless precincts of new houses, the copings of the quays, the colonnades of stone balconies. There is some one, how-

ever, whom this spectacle rejoices, a poor, ill, disheartened creature, who, stretched out at full length on the embroidered silk covering of a divan, her head resting on her clenched fists, gazes gleefully out through the streaming window-panes and gloats over all these ugly details:

"You see, my Fairy, this is just the kind of weather I wanted to-day. See them splash along. Are n't they hideous, are n't they filthy? What mud! It 's everywhere, in the streets, on the quays, even in the Seine, even in the sky. Ah! mud is a fine thing when you 're downhearted. I would like to dabble in it, to mould a statue with it, a statue one hundred feet high, and call it, 'My Ennui.'"

"But why do you suffer from ennui, my darling?" mildly inquires the ex-ballet-dancer, good-natured and rosy, from her armchair, in which she sits very erect for fear of damage to her hair, which is even more carefully arranged than usual. "Have n't you all that any one can need to be happy?"

And she proceeds, in her placid voice, to enumerate for the hundredth time her reasons for happiness, her renown, her genius, her beauty, all men at her feet, the handsomest, the most powerful; oh! yes, the most powerful, for that very day — But an ominous screech, a heart-rending wail from the jackal, maddened by the monotony of her desert, suddenly makes the studio windows rattle and sends the terrified old chrysalis back into her cocoon.

The completion of her group and its departure for the Salon has left Felicia for a week past in this state of prostration, of disgust, of heart-rending, distressing irritation. It requires all of the old fairy's unwearying patience, the magic of the memories she evokes every moment in the day, to make life endurable to her beside that restlessness, that wicked wrath which she can hear grumbling beneath the girl's silences, and which suddenly bursts forth in a bitter word, in a *pah!* of disgust *à propos* of everything. Her group is hideous. No one will speak of it. All the critics are donkeys. The public? an immense *goître* with three stories of chin. And yet, a few Sundays ago, when the Duc de Mora came with the superintendent of Fine Arts to see her work at the studio, she was so happy, so proud of the praise bestowed on her, so thoroughly delighted with her work, which she admired at a distance as if it were by another hand, now that the modelling-tool had ceased to form between her and her work the bond which tends to impair the impartiality of the artist's judgment.

But it is so every year. When the studio is robbed of the latest work, when her famous name is once more at the mercy of the public's unforeseen caprice, Felicia's preoccupations — for she has then no visible object in life — stray through the empty void of her heart, of her existence as one who has turned aside from the peaceful furrow, until she is once more intent upon another task. She shuts herself up, she refuses to see

anybody. One would say that she is distrustful of herself. The good Jenkins is the only one who can endure her during those crises. He even seems to take pleasure in them, as if he expected something from them. And yet God knows she is not amiable to him. Only yesterday he remained two hours with the beautiful ennui-ridden creature, who did not so much as speak a single word to him. If that is the sort of welcome she has in store for the great personage who does them the honor to dine with them — At that point the gentle Crenmitz, who has been placidly ruminating all these things and gazing at the slender toe of her tufted shoes, suddenly remembers that she has promised to make a dish of Viennese cakes for the dinner of the personage in question, and quietly leaves the studio on the tips of her little toes.

Still the rain, still the mud, still the beautiful sphinx, crouching in her seat, her eyes wandering aimlessly over the miry landscape. Of what is she thinking? What is she watching on those muddy roads, growing dim in the fading light, with that frown on her brow and that lip curled in disgust? Is she awaiting her destiny? A melancholy destiny, to have gone abroad in such weather, without fear of the darkness, of the mud.

Some one has entered the studio, a heavier step than Constance's mouse-like trot. The little servant, doubtless. And Felicia says roughly, without turning:

"Go to bed. I am not at home to any one."

"I should be very glad to speak with you if you were," a voice replied good-naturedly.

She starts, rises, and says in a softer tone, almost laughing at sight of that unexpected visitor:

"Ah! it 's you, young Minerva! How did you get in?"

"Very easily. All the doors are open."

"I am not surprised. Constance has been like a madwoman ever since morning, with her dinner."

"Yes, I saw. The reception room is full of flowers. You have —?"

"Oh! a stupid dinner, an official dinner. I don't know how I ever made up my mind to it. Sit down here, beside me. I am glad to see you."

Paul sat down, a little perturbed in mind. She had never seemed so lovely to him. In the half-light of the studio, amid the confusion of objects of art, bronzes, tapestries, her pallor cast a soft light, her eyes shone like jewels, and her long, close-fitting riding habit outlined the negligent attitude of her goddess-like figure. Then her tone was so affectionate, she seemed so pleased at his call. Why had he stayed away so long? It was almost a month since she had seen him. Had they ceased to be friends, pray? He excused himself as best he could. Business, a journey. Moreover, although he had not been there, he had often talked about her, oh! very often, almost every day.

"Really? With whom?"

"With —"

He was on the point of saying: "With Aline

Joyeuse," but something checked him, an indefinable sentiment, a sort of shame at uttering that name in the studio which had heard so many other names. There are some things which do not go together, although one cannot tell why. Paul preferred to answer with a falsehood which led him straight to the object of his call.

"With an excellent man upon whom you have unnecessarily inflicted great pain. Tell me, why have n't you finished the poor Nabob's bust? It was a source of great joy and great pride to him, the thought of that bust at the Salon. He relied upon it."

At the name of the Nabob she was slightly embarrassed.

"It is true," she said, "I broke my word. What do you expect? I am the slave of my whims. But it is my purpose to take it up again one of these days. See, the cloth thrown over it is all damp, so that the clay won't dry."

"And the accident? Ah! do you know, we hardly believed in that?"

"You were wrong. I never lie. A fall, a terrible crash. But the clay was fresh, I easily repaired it. Look!"

She removed the cloth with a movement of her arm; the Nabob stood forth, with his honest face beaming with joy at being reproduced, and so true, so natural, that Paul uttered a cry of admiration.

"Is n't it good?" she asked ingenuously. "A few touches there and there —" She had taken

the tool and the little sponge and pushed the stand into what little light there was. "It would be a matter of a few hours; but it could n't go to the Exhibition. This is the 22d; everything had to be sent in long ago."

"Pshaw! With influence —"

She frowned, and the wicked, drooping expression played about her mouth.

"True. The Duc de Mora's *protégée*. Oh! you need not excuse yourself. I know what people say of him, and I care as little for it as that!" She threw a pellet of clay which flattened out against the wall. "Perhaps, indeed, by dint of imagining what is not — But let us drop those vile things," she said, with a toss of her little aristocratic head. "I am anxious to give you pleasure, Minerva. Your friend shall go to the Salon this year."

At that moment the odor of caramel, of hot pastry invaded the studio, where the twilight was falling in fine, decolorized dust; and the Fairy appeared, with a plate of fritters in her hand, a true fairy, rejuvenated in gay attire, arrayed in a white tunic which afforded glimpses, beneath the yellowed lace, of her lovely old woman's arms, the charm that is the last to die.

"Look at my *kuchlen*, darling; see if they 're not a success this time. Oh! I beg your pardon; I did n't see that you had company. Ah! it 's Monsieur Paul? Are you pretty well, Monsieur Paul? Pray taste one of my cakes."

And the amiable old lady, to whom her costume seemed to impart extraordinary animation, came

prancing forward, balancing her plate on the ends of her doll-like fingers.

"Let him alone," said Felicia calmly. "You can offer him some at dinner."

"At dinner!"

The dancer was so thunderstruck that she nearly overturned her pretty cakes, which were as light and dainty and excellent as herself.

"Why, yes, I am keeping him to dinner with us. Oh! I beg you," she added with peculiar earnestness, seeing that the young man made a gesture of refusal, "I beg you, do not say no. You can do me a real service by staying to-night. Come, I did not hesitate a moment ago, you know."

She had taken his hand; really there seemed to be a strange disproportion between her request and the anxious, imploring tone in which it was made. Paul still held back. He was not properly dressed. How could she expect him to stay? A dinner-party at which she was to have other guests.

"My dinner-party? Why, I will countermand the orders for it. That is the way I feel. We three will dine alone, you and I and Constance."

"But, Felicia, my child, you can't think of doing such a thing. Upon my word! What about the — the other who will soon be here?"

"*Parbleu!* I will write to him to stay at home."

"Wretched girl, it is too late."

"Not at all. It's just striking six. The dinner was to be at half-past seven. You must send him this at once."

She wrote a note, in haste, on a corner of the table.

"*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* what a strange girl!" murmured the dancer, lost in bewilderment, while Felicia, enchanted, transfigured, joyously sealed her letter.

"There, my excuses are all made. The sick-headache was n't invented for Kadour. Oh! how glad I am!" she added, when the letter had gone; "what a delightful evening we will have! Kiss me, Constance. This won't prevent our doing honor to your *kuchlen*, and we shall enjoy seeing you in a pretty gown that makes you look younger than I."

Less than that would have induced the dancer to forgive this latest whim of her dear demon and the crime of *lèse-majesté* in which she had made her an accomplice. The idea of treating such a personage so cavalierly! No one else in the world would have done it, no one but her. As for Paul de Géry, he made no further attempt at resistance, being caught once more in the network from which he believed that he had set himself free by absence, but which, as soon as he crossed the threshold of the studio, suppressed his will and delivered him over, fast bound and conquered, to the sentiment that he was firmly resolved to combat.

It was evident that the dinner, a veritable gourmand's dinner, superintended by the Austrian even in its least important details, had been prepared for a guest of first-rate consequence. From the

high Berber chandeliers of carved wood, with seven branches, which shed a flood of light upon the richly embroidered cloth, to the long-necked wine-jugs of curious and exquisite shape, the sumptuous table appointments and the delicacy of the dishes, which were highly seasoned to an unusual degree, everything disclosed the importance of the expected guest and the pains that had been taken to please him. There was no mistaking the fact that it was an artist's establishment. Little silverware, but superb china, perfect harmony without the slightest attempt at arrangement. Old Rouen, pink Sèvres, Dutch glass mounted in old finely-wrought pewter met on that table as on a stand of rare objects collected by a connoisseur simply to gratify his taste. The result was some slight confusion in the household, dependent as it was upon the chance of a lucky find. The exquisite oil-cruet had no stopper. The broken salt-cellar overflowed on the cloth, and every moment it was: "What has become of the mustard-pot? What has happened to that fork?" All of which troubled de Géry a little on account of the young mistress of the house, who, for her part, was not in the least disturbed.

But something that made him even more ill at ease was his anxiety to know who the privileged guest was whose place he had taken at that table, whom they could entertain with such magnificence and at the same time such utter lack of ceremony. In spite of everything he felt as if that countermanded guest were present, a constant affront to his own dignity. In vain did he try to forget him;

everything reminded him of him, even to the holiday attire of the kindly Fairy, who sat opposite him and who still retained some of the grand manners which she had assumed in anticipation of the solemn occasion. The thought disturbed him, poisoned his joy in being there.

On the other hand, as is always the case in parties of two, where harmony of mood is very rare, he had never seen Felicia so affectionate, in such merry humor. She was in a state of effervescent, almost childlike gayety, one of those fervent outbursts of emotion which one experiences when some danger has passed, the reaction of a clear, blazing fire after the excitement of a shipwreck. She laughed heartily, teased Paul about his accent and what she called his bourgeois ideas. "For you are shockingly bourgeois, you know. But that is just what I like in you. It 's on account of the contrast, I have no doubt, because I was born under a bridge, in a gust of wind, that I have always been fond of sedate, logical natures."

"Oh! my dear, what do you suppose Monsieur Paul will think, when you say you were born under a bridge?" exclaimed the excellent Crenmitz, who could not accustom herself to the exaggeration of metaphors, and always took everything literally.

"Let him think what he pleases, my Fairy. We have n't our eye on him for a husband. I am sure he would have none of that monster known as an artist wife. He would think he had married the devil. You are quite right, Minerva. Art is a despot. One must give oneself to it unreservedly.

You put into your work all the imagination, energy, honesty, conscience that you possess, so that you have no more of any of them as long as you live, and the completion of the work tosses you adrift, helpless and without a compass, like a dismasted hulk, at the mercy of every wave. Such a wife would be a melancholy acquisition."

"And yet," the young man ventured timidly to observe, "it seems to me that art, however exacting it may be, cannot take entire possession of the woman. What would she do with her affections, with the craving for love, for self-sacrifice, which is in her, far more than in man, the motive for every act?"

She mused a moment before replying.

"You may be right, O wise Minerva! It is the truth that there are days when my life rings terribly hollow. I am conscious of holes in it, unfathomable depths. Everything disappears that I throw in to fill them up. My noblest artistic enthusiasms are swallowed up in them and die every time in a sigh. At such times I think of marriage. A husband, children, a lot of children, tumbling about the studio, all their nests to look after, the satisfaction of the physical activity which is lacking in our artistic lives, regular occupations, constant movement, innocent fun, which would compel one to play instead of always thinking in the dark and the great void, to laugh at a blow to one's self-esteem, to be simply a happy mother on the day when the public casts one aside as a used-up, played-out artist."

And in presence of that vision of domestic happiness the girl's lovely features assumed an expression which Paul had never before seen upon them, and which took entire possession of him, gave him a mad longing to carry away in his arms that beautiful wild bird dreaming of the dovecot, to protect her, to shelter her with the sure love of an honest man.

She continued, without looking at him:

"I am not so flighty as I seem to be, you know. Ask my dear godmother if I did n't keep straight up to the mark when she put me at boarding-school. But what a hurly-burly my life was after that! If you knew what a youth I had, if you knew how premature experience withered my mind, and what confusion there was, in my small girl's brain, between what was and was not forbidden, between reason and folly. Only art, which was constantly discussed and eulogized, stood erect in all that ruin, and I took refuge in that. That, perhaps, is why I shall never be anything but an artist, a woman apart from other women, a poor Amazon with her heart held captive under her iron breastplate, rushing into battle like a man, and condemned to live and die like a man."

Why did he not say to her then:

"Beautiful warrior, lay aside your weapons, don the floating robe and the charms of the sex to which you belong. I love you, I entreat you to marry me that you may be happy and may make me happy too."

Ah! this is why. He was afraid that the other,

he who was to come to dinner that night, you know, and who remained between them despite his absence, would hear him speak in that strain and would have the right to laugh at him or to pity him for such a fervent outburst.

"At all events, I promise you one thing," she continued, "and that is that if I ever have a daughter, I will try to make a true woman of her and not such a poor abandoned creature as I am. Oh! you know, my good Fairy, I do not mean that for you. You have always been kind to your demon, full of affection and care. Why just look at her, see how pretty she is, how young she looks to-night."

Enlivened by the repast, the lights, and one of those white dresses whose reflection causes wrinkles to disappear, La Crenmitz was leaning back in her chair, holding on a level with her half-closed eyes a glass of Château-Yquem from the cellar of their neighbor the Moulin-Rouge; and her little pink face, her airy pastel-like costume reflected in the golden wine, which loaned to it its sparkling warmth, recalled the former heroine of the dainty suppers after the play, the Crenmitz of the good old days, not an audacious hussy after the style of our modern operatic stars, but entirely unaffected and nestling contentedly in her splendor like a fine pearl in its mother-of-pearl shell. Felicia, who was certainly determined to be agreeable to everybody that evening, led her thoughts to the chapter of reminiscences, made her describe once more her triumphs in *Giselle* and in the *Péri*, and the ovations

" The famous dancer's figure stood out all white."

Copyrighted, 1898, by Louis Prang & Co.

Printed by L. Prang & Co. Boston

from the audience, the visit of the princes to her dressing-room, and Queen Amélie's gift, accompanied by such charming words. The evocation of those glorious scenes intoxicated the poor Fairy, her eyes shone, they could hear her little feet moving restlessly under the table as if seized by a dancing frenzy. And, indeed, when the dinner was at an end and they had returned to the studio, Constance began to pace back and forth, to describe a dance-step or a pirouette, talking all the time, interrupting herself to hum an air from some ballet to which she kept time with her head, then suddenly gathered herself together and with one leap was at the other end of the studio.

"Now she's off," whispered Felicia to de Géry. "Watch. It will be worth your while, for you are about to see La Crenmitz dance."

It was a fascinating, fairy-like spectacle. Against the background of the enormous room, drowned in shadow and hardly lighted save through the round window from without, where the moon was climbing upward in a deep blue sky, a typical operatic sky, the famous dancer's figure stood out all white, a light, airy unsubstantial ghost, flying, rather than springing, through the air; then, standing upon her slender toes, upheld in the air by naught but her outstretched arms, her face raised in a fleeting attitude in which nothing was visible but the smile, she came quickly forward toward the light, or receded with little jerky steps, so rapid that one constantly expected to hear the crash of glass and see her glide backward up the slope of the broad

moonbeam that shone aslant into the studio. There was one fact that imparted a strange, poetic charm to that fantastic ballet, and that was the absence of music, of every other sound than that of the measured footfalls, whose effect was heightened by the semi-darkness, of that quick, light patter no louder than the fall of the petals from a dahlia, one by one. This lasted for some minutes, then they could tell from the quickening of her breath that she was becoming exhausted.

"Enough, enough! Sit down," said Felicia.

Thereupon the little white ghost lighted on the edge of an armchair and sat there poised and ready to start anew, smiling and panting, until sleep seized upon her, and began to sway and rock her softly to and fro without disturbing her pretty attitude, like a dragon-fly on a willow branch that drags in the water and moves with the current.

As they watched her nodding in the chair, Felicia said:

"Poor little Fairy! that is the best and most serious thing in the way of friendship, protection and guardianship that I have had during my life. That butterfly acted as my godmother. Do you wonder now at the zigzags, the erratic flights of my mind? Lucky for me that I have clung to her."

She added abruptly, with joyful warmth:

"Ah! Minerva, Minerva, I am very glad that you came to-night. You must n't leave me alone so long again, you see. I need to have an upright mind like yours by my side, to see one true face

amid all the masks that surround me. But you 're fearfully bourgeois all the same," she added laughingly, "and a provincial to boot. But never mind! you are the man that I most enjoy looking at all the same. And I believe that my liking for you is due mainly to one thing. You remind me of some one who was the dearest friend of my youth, a serious, sensible little creature like yourself, bound fast to the commonplace side of existence, but mingling with it the element of idealism which we artists put aside for the benefit of our work alone. Some things that you say seem to me to come from her lips. You have a mouth built on the same antique model. Is that what makes your words alike? I don't know about that, but you certainly do resemble each other. I 'll show you."

As she sat opposite him at the table laden with sketches and albums, she began to draw as she talked, her face bending over the paper, her unmanageable curls shading her shapely little head. She was no longer the beautiful crouching monster, with the frowning anxious face, lamenting her own destiny; but a woman, a true woman, who loves and seeks to charm. Paul forgot all his suspicions then, in presence of such sincerity and grace. He was on the point of speaking, of pleading with her. It was the decisive moment. But the door opened and the little servant appeared. Monsieur le Duc had sent to ask if Mademoiselle were still suffering from her sick headache.

"Just as much as ever," she said testily.

When the servant had gone, there was a moment's silence between them, a freezing pause. Paul had risen. She went on with her sketch, her head still bent.

He walked away a few steps, then returned to the table and asked gently, astonished to find that he was so calm:

"Was it the Duc de Mora who was to dine here?"

"Yes — I was bored — a day of spleen. Such days are very bad for me."

"Was the duchess to come?"

"The duchess? No. I don't know her."

"Well, if I were in your place, I would never receive in my house, at my table, a married man whose wife I did not meet in society. You complain of being abandoned; why do you abandon yourself? When one is without reproach, one must keep oneself above suspicion. Do I offend you?"

"No, no, scold me, Minerva. I like your morality. It is frank and straightforward; it does n't squint like Jenkins'. As I told you, I need some one to guide me."

She held before him the sketch she had just finished.

"See! there 's the friend of whom I spoke to you. A deep, sure affection which I was foolish enough to throw away, like the wasteful idiot I am. I always used to invoke her memory in moments of perplexity, when there was some question to be decided or some sacrifice to be made.

I would say to myself: 'What will she think about it?' as we pause in our work to think of some great man, of one of our masters. You must fill that place for me. Will you?"

Paul did not answer. He was looking at Aline's portrait. It was she, it was she to the life, her regular profile, her kindly, laughing mouth, and the long curl caressing the slender neck. Ah! all the Ducs de Mora on earth might come now. Felicia no longer existed for him.

Poor Felicia, a creature endowed with superior powers, was much like those sorceresses who weave and ravel the destinies of others without the power to accomplish anything for their own happiness.

"Will you give me this sketch?" he said almost inaudibly, in a voice that trembled with emotion.

"Very gladly; she is pretty, is n't she? Ah! if you should happen to meet her, love her, marry her. She is worth more than all the rest. But, failing her, failing her —"

And the beautiful tamed sphinx looked up at him with her great tearful, laughing eyes, whose enigma was no longer insoluble.

XIV.

THE EXHIBITION.

"SUPERB!"

"A tremendous success. Barye never did anything as fine."

"And the bust of the Nabob! What a marvellous likeness! I tell you, Constance Crenmitz is happy. See her trotting about."

"What! is that La Crenmitz, that little old woman in a fur cape? I supposed she was dead twenty years ago."

Oh! no; on the contrary, she is very much alive. Enchanted, rejuvenated by the triumph of her goddaughter, who is decidedly *the* success of the Exhibition, she glides through the crowd of artists and people of fashion grouped around the two points where Felicia's contributions are exhibited like two huge masses of black backs, variegated costumes, jostling and squeezing in their struggles to look. Constance, usually so retiring, makes her way into the front row, listens to the discussions, catches on the wing snatches of sentences, technical phrases which she remembers, nods her head approvingly, smiles, shrugs her shoulders when she hears any slighting remark,

longing to crush the first person who should fail to admire.

Whether it be the excellent Crenmitz or another, you always see, at the opening of the Salon, that shadow prowling furtively about where people are conversing, with ears on the alert and an anxious expression; sometimes it is an old father who thanks you with a glance for a kindly word said in passing, or assumes a despairing expression at the epigram which you hurl at a work of art and which strikes a heart behind you. A face not to be omitted surely, if ever some painter in love with things modern should conceive the idea of reproducing on canvas that perfectly typical manifestation of Parisian life, the opening of the Salon in that vast hothouse of statuary, with the yellow gravelled paths and the great glass ceiling, beneath which, half-way from the floor, the galleries of the first tier stand forth, lined with heads bending over to look, and with extemporized waving draperies.

In a light that seems slightly cold and pale as it falls on the green decorations of the walls, where the rays become rarefied, one would say, in order to afford the spectators an opportunity for concentration and accuracy of vision, the crowd moves slowly back and forth, pauses, scatters over the benches, divided into groups, and yet mingling castes more thoroughly than any other gathering, just as the fickle and changing weather, at that time of year, brings together all sorts of costumes, so that the black lace and superb train of the great lady who has come to observe the effect of her

own portrait rub against the Siberian furs of the actress who has just returned from Russia and proposes that everybody shall know it.

Here there are no boxes, no reserved seats, and that is what gives such abiding interest and charm to this first view in broad daylight. The real society women can pass judgment at close quarters on the painted beauties that excite so much applause by artificial light; the tiny hat, latest shape, of the Marquise de Bois-l'Héry and her like brushes against the more than modest costume of some artist's wife or daughter, while the model who has posed for that lovely Andromeda near the entrance struts triumphantly by, dressed in a too short skirt, in wretched clothes tossed upon her beauty with the utmost lack of taste. They scrutinize one another, admire or disparage one another, exchange contemptuous, disdainful or inquisitive glances, which suddenly become fixed as some celebrity passes, the illustrious critic, for instance, whom we seem to see at this moment, serene and majestic, his powerful face framed in long hair, making the circuit of the exhibits of sculpture, followed by half a score of young disciples who hang breathlessly upon his kindly dicta. Although the sound of voices is lost in that immense vessel, which is resonant only under the two arched doorways of entrance and exit, faces assume extraordinary intensity there, a character of energy and animation especially noticeable in the vast, dark recess of the restaurant, overflowing with a gesticulating multitude, the light hats of the

women and the waiters' white aprons standing out in bold relief against the background of dark clothing, and in the broad aisle in the centre, where the swarm of promenaders *en vignette* forms a striking contrast to the immobility of the statues, the unconscious palpitation with which their chalky whiteness and their glorified attitudes are encompassed.

There are gigantic wings spread for flight, a sphere upheld by four allegorical figures, whose attitude, as if they were twirling their burden, suggests a vague waltz measure, a marvel of equilibrium which perfectly produces the illusion of the earth's revolution; and there are arms raised as a signal, bodies of heroic size, containing an allegory, a symbol that brings death and immortality upon them, gives them to history, to legend, to the ideal world of the museums which nations visit from curiosity or admiration.

Although Felicia's bronze group had not the proportions of those productions, its exceptional merit had procured for it the honor of a position at one of the points of intersection of the aisles in the centre, from which the public was standing respectfully aloof at that moment, staring over the shoulders of the line of attendants and police officers at the Bey of Tunis and his suite, a group of long burnous, falling in sculptural folds, which made them seem like living statues confronting the dead ones. The bey, who had been in Paris for a few days, the lion of all the first nights, had expressed a desire to see the opening of the Salon.

He was "an enlightened prince, a friend of the arts," who possessed a gallery of amazing Turkish pictures on the Bardo, and chromo-lithographic reproductions of all the battles of the First Empire. The great Arabian hound had caught his eye as soon as he entered the hall of sculpture. It was the *slougui* to the life, the genuine slender, nervous *slougui* of his country, the companion of all his hunts. He laughed in his black beard, felt the animal's loins, patted his muscles, seemed to be trying to rouse him, while, with dilated nostrils, protruding teeth, every limb outstretched and indefatigable in its strength and elasticity, the aristocratic beast, the beast of prey, ardent in love and in the chase, drunk with his twofold drunkenness, his eyes fixed on his victim, seemed to be already tasting the delights of his victory, with the end of his tongue hanging from his mouth, as he sharpened his teeth with a ferocious laugh. If you looked only at him, you said to yourself: "He has him!" But a glance at the fox reassured you at once. Under his lustrous, velvety coat, catlike, with his body almost touching the ground, skimming along without effort, you felt that he was in truth a wizard, and his fine head with its pointed ears, which he turned toward the hound as he ran, had an ironical expression of security which clearly indicated the gift he had received from the gods.

While an inspector of the Beaux-Arts, who had hurried to the spot, with his uniform all awry, and bald to the middle of his back, explained to

Mohammed the apologue of "The Dog and the Fox," as told in the catalogue, with this moral: "Suppose that they meet," and the note: "The property of the Duc de Mora," the bulky Hemerlingue, puffing and perspiring beside his Highness, had great difficulty in persuading him that that masterly production was the work of the lovely equestrian they had met in the Bois the day before. How could a woman with a woman's weak hands so soften the hard bronze and give it the appearance of flesh? Of all the marvels of Paris that one caused the bey the most profound amazement. So he asked the official if there was nothing else of the same artist's to see.

"Yes, indeed, Monseigneur, another *chef-d'œuvre*. If your Highness will come this way I will take you to it."

The bey moved on with his suite. They were all fine specimens of their race, beautifully chiselled features and pure profiles, complexions of a warm pallor of which the snowy whiteness of the haik absorbed even the reflection. Magnificently draped, they contrasted strangely with the busts which were ranged on both sides of the aisle they had taken, and which, perched on their high pedestals, exiled from their familiar surroundings, from the environment in which they would doubtless have recalled some engrossing toil, some deep affection, a busy and courageous life, seemed very forlorn in the empty air about them and presented the distressing aspect of people who had gone astray and were very much ashamed to find them-

selves there. Aside from two or three female figures, well-rounded shoulders enveloped in petrified lace, hair reproduced in marble with the soft touch that gives the impression of a powdered head-dress, and a few profiles of children with simple lines, in which the polish of the stone seems like the moisture of life, there were nothing but wrinkles, furrows, contortions and grimaces, our excess of toil and activity, our nervous paroxysms and our fevers contrasted with that art of repose and noble serenity.

The Nabob's ugliness, at all events, had in its favor its energy, the peculiar characteristics of the adventurer and the *prolétaire*, and that kindly expression so well rendered by the artist, who had taken pains to mix a supply of ochre with her plaster, thereby giving it almost the swarthy, sunburned tone of the model. The Arabs, on seeing it, uttered a stifled exclamation: "Bon-Saïd!" (the father of good-luck). It was the Nabob's sobriquet at Tunis, the label of his fortune, so to speak. The bey, for his part, thinking that someone intended to make sport of him by bringing him thus face to face with the detested *mercanti*, glanced suspiciously at the inspector.

"Jansoulet?" he said in his guttural voice.

"Yes, your Highness, Bernard Jansoulet, the new Deputy for Corsica."

At that the bey turned to Hemerlingue, with a frown on his face.

"Deputy?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, the news came this morning; but nothing is settled yet."

And the banker, ill at ease and lowering his voice, added: "No French Chamber would ever admit that adventurer."

No matter! the blow had been dealt at the bey's blind confidence in his baron-financier. Hemerlingue had declared so positively that the other would never be chosen, that they could act freely and without fear so far as he was concerned. And lo! instead of the crushed, discredited man, a representative of the nation towered before him, a deputy whose figure in stone Parisians thronged to admire; for, from the Oriental sovereign's standpoint, as that public exhibition necessarily involved the idea of conferring honor upon the subject, that bust had all the prestige of a statue overlooking a public square. Hemerlingue, even yellower than usual, inwardly accused himself of bungling and imprudence. But how could he have suspected such a thing? He had been assured that the bust was not finished. And, indeed, it had arrived that very morning, and seemed overjoyed to be there, quivering with gratified pride, expressing contempt for its enemies with the good-natured smile of its curling lip. A veritable silent revenge for the disaster at Saint-Romans.

For several minutes the bey, as cold and impassive as the carved image, stared at it without speaking, his forehead divided by a straight fold wherein his courtiers alone could read his wrath; then, after a few words spoken rapidly in Arabic, to order his carriages and collect his scattered suite, he strode gravely toward the exit, without

deigning to look at anything else. Who can say what takes place in those august brains, surfeited with power? Even our western monarchs have incomprehensible whims; but they are as nothing beside Oriental caprices. Monsieur l'Inspecteur des Beaux-Arts, who had confidently expected to show his Highness all over the Exhibition, and to earn thereby the pretty little red and green ribbon of the Order of Nicham-Iftikhar, never knew the secret of that sudden flight.

Just as the white haiks disappeared under the porch, and just in time to catch a glimpse of the fluttering of their last folds, the Nabob entered through the centre door. That morning he had received the news: "Elected by an overwhelming majority;" and, after a sumptuous breakfast, at which many a toast had been drunk to the new Deputy for Corsica, he had come with some of his guests, to show himself, to see himself as well, and to enjoy his new glory to the full.

The first person he saw when he arrived was Felicia Ruys, leaning against the pedestal of a statue, receiving compliments and homage with which he hastened to mingle his own. She was dressed simply, in a black embroidered gown trimmed with jet, tempering the severe simplicity of her costume by its scintillating reflections and by the brilliancy of a fascinating little hat adorned with the feathers of the *lophophore*, whose changing colors her hair, tightly curled over the forehead and parted at the neck in broad waves, seemed to prolong and to soften.

A crowd of artists, of society folk hastened to pay their respects to so great genius allied to so great beauty; and Jenkins, bareheaded, swelling with effusive warmth, went about from one to another, extorting enthusiasm, but broadening the circle about that youthful renown, posing as both guardian and fugleman. Meanwhile, his wife was talking with the young woman. Poor Madame Jenkins! He had said to her in that brutal voice which she alone knew: "You must go and speak to Felicia." And she had obeyed, restraining her emotion; for she knew now what lay hidden beneath that fatherly affection, although she avoided any explanation with the doctor as if she were apprehensive of the result.

After Madame Jenkins, the Nabob rushed to the artist's side, and taking her slender, neatly gloved hands in his two great paws expressed his gratitude with a warmth that brought the tears to his own eyes.

"You have done me a very great honor, Mademoiselle, to associate my name with yours, my humble self with your triumph, and to prove to all these vermin who are digging their claws into me that you don't believe in all the slanderous reports that are current about me. Really, it is something I can never forget. I might cover this magnificent bust with gold and diamonds and I should still be in your debt."

Luckily for the good Nabob, who was more susceptible to emotion than eloquent, he was obliged to make room for all those who were attracted by

the refulgent talent, the artistic personality before their eyes: frantic enthusiasm which, for lack of words in which to express itself, disappears as it came; worldly admiration, inspired by kindly feeling, by an earnest desire to please, but whose every word is like a cold shower-bath; and then the hearty hand-clasps of rivals, of comrades, some very frank and cordial, others which communicate to you the inertness of their pressure; the tall, conceited zany whose absurd praise ought to delight you beyond measure, and who, in order not to spoil you utterly, accompanies it with "a few trifling reservations;" and the man who, while overwhelming you with compliments, proves to you that you do not know the first word of the trade; and the other good fellow, full of business, who stops just long enough to whisper in your ear that "So-and-so, the famous critic, does n't seem to be satisfied." Felicia listened to it all with the utmost tranquillity, being raised by her triumph above the petty slurs of envy, and glowed with pride when a renowned veteran, some old associate of her father's, tossed her a "Well done, little one!" which carried her back to the past, to the little corner that was always reserved for her in the paternal studio in the days when she was beginning to carve out a little glory for herself in the renown of the great Ruys. But as a whole the congratulations left her quite unmoved, because she missed one which was more desirable in her eyes than all the rest, and which she was surprised that she had not yet received. Clearly she thought

of him more than she had ever thought of any man before. Was this love at last, the great love that is so rare in the heart of an artist, who is incapable of abandoning herself unreservedly to a sentiment, or was it simply a dream of an honest, bourgeois life, well protected against ennui, that vile ennui, the precursor of storms, which she had so much reason to dread? In any event, she suffered herself to be deceived and had been living for several days in a state of delicious unrest, for love is so strong, so beautiful, that its semblance, its mirage, takes us captive and may move us as deeply as love itself.

Has it ever happened to you, as you walked along the street, thinking intently of some absent person very dear to your heart, to be warned of his approach by meeting one or more persons who bear a vague resemblance to him, preparatory images, outline sketches of the face that is soon to rise before you, which come forth from the crowd like successive appeals to your overstrained attention? These are magnetic, nervous phenomena at which we must not smile too broadly, because they constitute a susceptibility to suffering. Several times Felicia had fancied that she recognized Paul de Géry's curly head in the ever-moving, ever-changing flow of visitors, when suddenly she uttered a cry of pleasure. It was not he, however, but some one who much resembled him, whose regular, tranquil face was always blended now in her thoughts with that of her friend Paul, as the result of a resemblance rather moral than physical,

and of the mild influence they both exerted over her mind.

"Aline!"

"Felicia!"

Although nothing is more difficult of comprehension than the friendship of two of society's queens, dividing salon royalty among themselves and lavishing flattering epithets, the petty graces of feminine effusiveness, upon each other, the friendships of childhood retain in the woman a frankness of demeanor which distinguishes them and makes them recognizable among all other friendships; bonds woven in innocence and woven firmly, like the pieces of needlework made by little girls, whereon an inexperienced hand has lavished thread and great knots; plants that have grown in virgin soil, past their bloom but deeply-rooted and full of life and vigor. And what joy to turn back a few steps, hand in hand, — boarding-school Arguses, where are you? — with equal knowledge of the road and of its slightest windings, and with the same wistful laugh. Standing a little apart, the two girls, who needed only to stand face to face to forget five years of separation, talked rapidly, recalling bygone days, while little Père Joyeuse, his ruddy face set off by a new cravat, drew himself up to his full height, proud beyond words that his daughter should be so warmly greeted by a celebrity. Proud he certainly had reason to be, for that little Parisian, even beside her resplendent friend, retained her full value for charm and youth and luminous innocence, beneath her twenty years,

her rich, golden girlhood, which the joy of meeting caused to put forth fresh flowers.

"How happy you must be! I have n't seen anything; but I hear everybody say that it is so beautiful."

"Happy above all things to find you again, little Aline. It is such a long time —"

"I should say as much, you bad girl. Whose fault is it?"

In the saddest recess of her memory Felicia found the date of the rupture between them, coincident in her mind with another date when her youth died in a never-to-be-forgotten scene.

"What have you been doing all this time, my love?"

"Oh! always the same thing — nothing worth talking about."

"Yes, yes, we know what you call doing nothing, little brave heart. It is giving your life to others, is it not?"

But Aline was no longer listening. She was smiling affectionately at a point straight before her, and Felicia, turning to see to whom that smile was addressed, saw Paul de Géry replying to Mademoiselle Joyeuse's shy and blushing salutation.

"Do you know each other, pray?"

"Do I know Monsieur Paul! I should think so. We talk of you often enough. Has he never told you?"

"Never. He is terribly sly —"

She stopped abruptly as a light flashed through her mind; and, paying no heed to de Géry, who

came forward to do homage to her triumph, she leaned hastily toward Aline and whispered to her. The other blushed, protested with smiles, with inaudible words: "How can you imagine such a thing? At my age. A grandmamma!" And at last she grasped her father's arm to escape that friendly raillery.

When Felicia saw the two young people walk away side by side, when she realized — what they themselves did not yet know — that they loved each other, she felt as if everything about her were crumbling. And when her dream lay at her feet, in a thousand fragments, she began to stamp upon it in a rage. After all, he was quite right to prefer that little Aline to her. Would a respectable man ever dare to marry Mademoiselle Ruys? She with a home of her own, a family, nonsense! You are a strumpet's daughter, my dear; you must be a strumpet yourself, if you wish to be anything.

The day was drawing near its close. The crowd, moving more rapidly than before, with gaps here and there, was beginning to stream toward the exit, after eddying violently around the success of the year, surfeited, a little weary, but still excited by the artistic electricity with which the atmosphere was charged A great ray of sunlight, the sunlight of four o'clock in the afternoon, illuminated the rosework of the windows, cast upon the gravelled paths rainbow-like beams that crept gently up the bronze or marble of the statues, suffusing a lovely nude body with bright colors and giving to the vast museum something of the aspect of a garden. Felicia,

absorbed in her profound, melancholy reverie, did not see the man who came toward her, superb, refined, fascinating, through the throng of visitors, who respectfully opened a passage for him, while the name of "Mora" was whispered on every side.

"Well, well, Mademoiselle, this is a grand triumph. I regret only one thing, that is the unpleasant symbolism that you have concealed in your masterpiece."

When she saw the duke standing before her, she shuddered.

"Ah! yes, the symbolism," she said, looking up at him with a disheartened smile; and, leaning against the pedestal of the great, voluptuous statue, near which they happened to be standing, with her eyes closed, like a woman who gives herself voluntarily or surrenders, she murmured in a low, very low voice:

"Rabelais lied, as all men lie. The real truth is that the fox can go no farther, that he is at the end of his breath and his courage, ready to fall into the ditch, and if the hound persists in his pursuit—"

Mora started, became a little paler, as all the blood in his veins rushed back to his heart. Two darkly flashing glances met, two words were swiftly exchanged with the ends of the lips; then the duke bowed low and walked away with a step as brisk and light as if the gods were carrying him.

There was only one man in the palace as happy as he at that moment, and that was the Nabob. Escorted by his friends, he occupied, filled the main aisle all by himself, talking in a loud tone,

gesticulating, so proud that he seemed almost handsome, as if, by dint of gazing long at his bust in artless admiration, he had caught a little of the splendid idealization with which the artist had softened the vulgarity of the type. The head at an elevation of three-fourths, free from the high rolling collar, gave rise to contradictory opinions from the spectators concerning the resemblance; and Jansoulet's name, which had been repeated so many times by the electoral urns, was echoed by the prettiest lips in Paris, by its most influential voices. Any other than the Nabob would have been embarrassed by hearing as he passed the exclamations of these curious bystanders, who were not always in sympathy with him. But the platform and the springboard were congenial to that nature, which was always braver under the fire of staring eyes, like those women who are beautiful and clever only in society, and whom the slightest admiration transfigures and perfects.

When he felt that that delirious joy was subsiding, when he thought that he had drained the cup of his proud intoxication, he had only to say to himself: "Deputy! I am a deputy!" and the triumphal cup was brimming full once more. It meant the raising of the embargo from all his property, the awakening from a nightmare of two months' duration, the blast of the mistral sweeping away all vexations, all anxieties, even to the insult at Saint-Romans, heavily as it weighed on his memory.

Deputy!

He laughed all by himself as he thought of the baron's face when he heard the news, of the bey's stupefaction when he was taken to look at his bust; and suddenly, at the thought that he was no longer a mere adventurer gorged with gold, arousing the senseless admiration of the vulgar like an enormous nugget in a money-changer's window, but that he was entitled to be looked upon as one of the chosen exponents of the national will, his good-natured, mobile face assumed an expression of ponderous gravity suited to the occasion, his mind was filled with plans for the future, for reform, and the longing to profit by the lessons he had lately learned from destiny. Already, mindful of the promise he had made de Géry, he exhibited a certain contemptuous coldness for the hungry herd that fawned servilely about his heels, and seemed to have adopted deliberately a system of peremptory contradiction. He called the Marquis de Bois-l'Héry "my good fellow," sharply imposed silence on the Governor, whose enthusiasm was becoming scandalous, and was inwardly making a solemn vow that he would rid himself as speedily as possible of all that begging, compromising horde of bohemians, when an excellent opportunity presented itself for him to begin to put his purpose in execution. Moëssard, the handsome Moëssard, in a sky-blue cravat, pale and puffed-up like a white abscess, his bust confined in a tight frock coat, seeing that the Nabob, after making the circuit of the hall of sculpture a score of times, was walking toward the exit, forced his way through the crowd,

sprang to his side and said, as he passed his arm through Jansoulet's:

"You are to take me with you, you know —"

Of late, especially during the period of the election, he had assumed an authority on Place Vendôme almost equal to Monpavon's, but more impudent; for, in respect of impudence, the queen's lover had not his equal on the sidewalk that extends from Rue Drouot to the Madeleine. But on this occasion he had a bad fall. The muscular arm that he grasped violently shook itself free, and the Nabob answered him very shortly:

"I am very sorry, my dear fellow, but I have no seat to offer you."

No seat, in a carriage as big as a house, which had often held five of them!

Moëssard gazed at him in utter stupefaction.

"But I had something very urgent to say to you. On the subject of my little note. You received it, did you not?"

"To be sure, and Monsieur de Géry should have answered it this morning. What you ask is impossible. Twenty thousand francs! — *tonnerre de Dieu!* how fast you go."

"It seems to me, however, that my services —" stammered the fop.

"Have been handsomely paid. So it seems to me too. Two hundred thousand francs in five months! We will stop at that, if you please. You have long teeth, young man; we must file them a bit."

They exchanged these words as they walked

along, pushed by the crowd which flocked like sheep through the door of exit. Moëssard stopped:

"That is your last word?"

The Nabob hesitated a second, seized by a presentiment of evil at sight of that pale, wicked mouth; then he remembered the promise he had given his friend.

"That is my last word."

"Very well, we will see," said Beau Moëssard, while his cane cleft the air with a noise like a snake's hiss; and, turning on his heel, he strode rapidly away like a man who has very important business awaiting him.

Jansoulet continued his triumphal march. On that day it would have required something much more serious to disturb the equilibrium of his happiness; on the other hand he felt encouraged by the beginning so successfully accomplished.

The great vestibule was filled with a compact crowd, whom the approach of the hour for closing impelled toward the outer world, but whom one of the sudden downpours which seem an essential part of the opening of the Salon detained under the porch with its floor of hard-trodden gravel, like the entrance to the Circus where the lady-killers disport themselves. It was a curious, thoroughly Parisian spectacle.

Outside, the sunbeams shining through the rain, attaching to its limpid threads those sharp, brilliant blades of light which justify the proverb "It rains halberds;" the young verdure of the Champs-Élysées, the clumps of dripping, rustling rhodo-

dendrons, the carriages drawn up in line on the avenue, the oilcloth capes of the coachmen, all the splendid accoutrements of the horses to which the water and the sunbeams imparted vastly greater richness and effect, and everywhere a gleam of blue, the blue of the sky, smiling in the interval between two showers.

Within, laughter, idle chatter, salutations, impatience, skirts turned up, satins puffing vaingloriously over the narrow pleats of petticoats and delicately striped silk stockings, oceans of fringe, of lace, of flounces, held with one hand in too heavy bundles, and torn beyond recognition. Then, to connect the two sides of the picture, the prisoners framed by the arched doorway and standing in its dark shadow, with the vast background of light behind them, footmen running about under umbrellas, shouting names of coachmen and names of masters, and coupés slowly approaching, into which terrified couples hastily jump.

"Monsieur Jansoulet's carriage!"

Everybody turned to look, but we know that that disturbed him but little. And while the honest Nabob posed for a moment, awaiting his people, amid those fashionable women, those famous men, that assorted gathering of all Paris which was present there with a name to fit each of its figures, a slender, neatly-gloved hand was held out to him, and the Duc de Mora, who was about to enter his coupé, said to him as he passed, with the effusiveness that happiness gives to the most reserved of men:

"My congratulations, my dear deputy."

It was said aloud, and every one could hear, — "My dear deputy."

There is in the life of every man a golden hour, a luminous mountain-top where all that he can hope for of prosperity, of joy, of triumph, awaits him and is showered upon him. The mountain is more or less high, more or less precipitous and difficult to climb; but it exists equally for all, for the most powerful and the humblest. But, like the longest day of the year, when the sun has reached the end of his upward journey and the next day seems a first step toward winter, that *summum bonum* of human existence is but a moment to be enjoyed, after which we have no choice but to descend. Poor man! you must remember that late afternoon in May, that time of alternating rain and sunshine, you must fix its changing splendor forever in your memory. It was the hour of your midsummer, when the flowers were blooming, the branches bending beneath their weight of golden fruit, and the crops whose gleanings you so recklessly threw aside, were fully ripe. The star will fade now, gradually receding and descending, and soon will be incapable of piercing the woeful darkness wherein your destiny is about to be fulfilled.

XV.

MEMOIRS OF A CLERK. — IN THE RECEPTION-ROOM.

THERE was a grand affair last Saturday on Place Vendôme.

Monsieur Bernard Jansoulet, the new Deputy for Corsica, gave a magnificent evening party in honor of his election, with municipal guards at the door, the whole house illuminated and two thousand invitations strewn broadcast through fashionable Paris.

I was indebted to the distinction of my manners, to the resonance of my voice, which the president of the administrative council has had a chance to appreciate at the meetings of the *Caisse Territoriale*, for the privilege of taking part in that sumptuous festivity, where I stood for three hours in the reception-room, amid flowers and draperies, dressed in scarlet and gold, with the majestic bearing peculiar to persons who exert some little authority, and with my calves exposed for the first time in my life, and sent the name of each guest like the report of a cannon into the long line of five salons, a resplendent footman saluting each time with the *bing* of his halberd on the floor.

How many interesting observations I was able to make that evening, what jocose sallies, what quips, all in most excellent taste, were tossed back and forth by the servants, concerning the people of fashion who passed! I should never have heard anything so amusing with the vine-dressers of Montbars. I ought to say that the worthy M. Barreau caused us all to be served with a hearty, well-irrigated lunch in his office, which was filled to the ceiling with iced drinks and refreshments, thereby putting every one of us in an excellent humor, which was maintained throughout the evening by glasses of punch and champagne whisked from the salvers as they passed.

The masters, however, were not so contented as we were. When I reached my post, at nine o'clock, I was struck by the anxious, nervous face of the Nabob, whom I spied walking with M. de Géry through the brilliantly-lighted, empty salons, talking earnestly and gesticulating wildly.

"I will kill him," he said, "I will kill him."

The other tried to soothe him, then Madame appeared and they talked about something else.

A magnificent figure of a woman, that Levantine, twice as powerful as I am, and dazzling to look at with her diamond diadem, the jewels that covered her huge white shoulders, her back as round as her breast, her waist squeezed into a breastplate of greenish gold, which extended in long stripes the whole length of her skirt. I never saw anything so rich, so imposing. She was like one of those beautiful white elephants

with towers on their backs that we read about in books of travel. When she walked, clinging painfully to the furniture, all her flesh shook and her ornaments jangled like old iron. With it all a very shrill little voice and a beautiful red face which a little negro boy kept fanning all the time with a fan of white feathers as big as a peacock's tail.

It was the first time that that indolent savage had made her appearance in Parisian society, and M. Jansoulet seemed very proud and very happy that she had consented to preside at his fête: a task that involved no great labor on the lady's part, however, for, leaving her husband to receive his guests in the first salon, she went and stretched herself out on the couch in the little Japanese salon, wedged between two piles of cushions, and perfectly motionless, so that you could see her in the distance, at the end of the line of salons, like an idol, under the great fan which her negro waved with a clocklike motion, as if by machinery. These foreigners have the brass for you!

The Nabob's irritation had impressed me all the same, and as I saw his valet going downstairs four steps at a time, I caught him on the wing and whispered in his ear:

"What the deuce is the matter with your governor, Monsieur Noël?"

"It's the article in the *Messager*," he replied, and I had to abandon the idea of finding out anything more for the moment, as a loud ring at the bell announced the arrival of the first carriage, and it was followed by a multitude of others.

Intent upon my business, giving close attention to the proper pronunciation of the names given me and to making them ricochet from salon to salon, I thought of nothing else. It is no easy matter to announce properly people who always think that their names must be well known, so that they simply murmur them through their closed lips as they pass, and then are surprised to hear you murder them in your most sonorous tone and almost bear you a grudge for the unimpressive entrances, greeted with faint smiles, that follow a bungling announcement. The task was made even more difficult at M. Jansoulet's by the swarm of foreigners, Turks, Egyptians, Persians, Tunisians. I do not mention the Corsicans, who were also very numerous on that occasion, because, during my four years of service at the *Caisse Territoriale*, I have become accustomed to pronouncing those high-sounding, interminable names, always followed by the name of a place: "Paganetti of Porto-Vecchio, Bastelica of Bonifacio, Painatchi of Barbicaglia."

I enjoyed dwelling upon those Italian syllables, giving them their full resonant value, and I could see by the stupefied expressions of those worthy islanders how surprised and delighted they were to be introduced in that fashion into the best continental society. But with the Turks, the pachas and beys and effendis, I had much more difficulty, and I must often have pronounced them awry, for M. Jansoulet, on two different occasions, sent word to me to pay more attention to the names

given me, and especially to announce them more naturally. That command, uttered in a loud voice at the door of the reception-room with unnecessary brutality, annoyed me exceedingly, and prevented me — shall I confess it? — from pitying the vulgar parvenu when I learned, during the evening, what sharp thorns had found their way into his bed of roses.

From half-past ten till midnight the bell did not cease to ring, the carriages to rumble under the porch, the guests to follow on one another's heels, deputies, senators, councillors of state, municipal councillors, who acted much more as if they were attending a meeting of shareholders than an evening party in society. What did it all mean? I could not succeed in puzzling it out, but a word from Nicklauss the door-keeper opened my eyes.

"Do you notice, Monsieur Passajon," said that worthy retainer, standing in front of me, halberd in hand, "do you notice how few ladies we have?"

Pardieu! that was it. And we two were not the only ones who noticed it. At each new arrival, I heard the Nabob, who stood near the door, exclaim in consternation with the hoarse voice of a Marseillais with a cold in his head:

"Alone?"

The guest would apologize in an undertone. *M-m-m-m-m-m* — his wife not very well. Very sorry indeed. Then another would come; and the same question would bring the same reply.

We heard that word "alone" so much, that at last we began to joke about it in the reception-

room; outriders and footmen tossed it from one to another when a new guest entered: "Alone!" And we laughed and enjoyed ourselves. But M. Nicklauss, with his extended knowledge of society, considered that the almost universal abstention of the fair sex was by no means natural.

"It must be the article in the *Messager*," he said.

Everybody was talking of that rascally article, and as each guest paused before entering the salon to look himself over in the mirror with its garland of flowers, I overheard snatches of whispered dialogue of this sort:

"Have you read it?"

"It's a frightful thing."

"Do you believe it can possibly be true?"

"I have no idea. At all events I preferred not to bring my wife."

"I felt as you did. A man can go anywhere without compromising himself."

"Of course. While a woman —"

Then they would go in, their crush hats under their arms, with the conquering air of married men unaccompanied by their wives.

What was this newspaper article, this terrible article which threatened so seriously the influence of such a wealthy man? Unfortunately my duties held me fast; I could not go down to the butler's pantry or the dressing-room, to talk with the coachmen, the footmen and outriders whom I saw standing at the foot of the stairs, amusing themselves by making fun of the people who went up. What

can you expect? The masters give themselves too many airs. How could one help laughing to see the Marquis and Marquise de Bois-l'Héry sail by with a haughty air and empty stomachs, after all the stories we have heard about Monsieur's business arrangements and Madame's dresses? And then the Jenkins family, so affectionate, so united, the attentive doctor throwing a lace shawl over his wife's shoulders for fear she may take cold in the hall; she, tricked out and smiling, dressed all in velvet, with a train yards long, leaning on her husband's arm as if to say: "How happy I am!" when I know that, ever since the death of the Irishwoman, his lawful wife, the doctor has been thinking of getting rid of his old incubus so that he can marry a young woman, and that the old incubus passes her nights in despair, in wearing away with tears what beauty she still has.

The amusing part of it was that not one of them all suspected the quips and jokes that were spit out at them as they passed, the vile things that their trains swept up from the vestibule carpet, and the whole crew assumed disdainful airs fit to make one die with laughter.

The two ladies I have named, the Governor's wife, a little Corsican woman whose heavy eyebrows, white teeth and ruddy cheeks, dark in the lower part, make her look like a clean-shaved Auvergnat — a clever creature by the way, and always laughing except when her husband looks at other women — these with a few Levantines with diadems of gold or pearls, less resplendent

than ours but in the same style, wives of upholsterers, jewellers, dealers who supply the household regularly, with shoulders as extensive as shop-fronts and dresses in which the material was not sparingly used; and lastly, several wives of clerks at the *Caisse Territoriale*, with rustling dresses and devil a sou in their pockets, — such was the representation of the fair sex at that function, some thirty ladies lost among myriads of black coats; one might as well say that there were none at all there. From time to time, Cassagne, Laporte and Grandvarlet, who were carrying dishes, told us what was going on in the salons.

"Ah! my children, if you could just see how gloomy, how mournful it is! The men don't move from the sideboards. The women are all sitting in a circle, way at the end, fanning themselves, without a word. La Grosse[1] does n't speak to any one. I believe she 's taking a snooze. Monsieur 's the one who keeps things going. Père Passajon, a glass of Château-Larose. It will set you up."

All those young fellows were delightful to me, and took a mischievous pleasure in doing the honors of the cellar so often and in such bumpers that my tongue began to grow heavy and uncertain; as they said to me, in their slightly familiar language: "You 're spluttering, uncle." Luckily the last of the effendis had arrived and there was no one else to announce; for it was of no use for me to struggle against it, every time I walked between the hang-

[1] The Fat Woman, or "Fatty."

ings to launch a name into the salons, the chandeliers whirled round and round with hundreds of thousands of dancing lights, and the floors became inclined planes as slippery and steep as Russian mountains. I must have spluttered, that is sure.

The fresh night air and repeated ablutions at the pump in the courtyard soon got the better of that little indisposition, and when I betook myself to the servants' quarters it had altogether disappeared. I found a large and merry party gathered around a *marquise* of champagne, of which all my nieces, in fine array, with fluffy hair and cravats of pink ribbon, took their full share, notwithstanding the fascinating little shrieks and grimaces, which deceived no one. Naturally they were talking about the famous article, an article by Moëssard, it seems, full of shocking disclosures concerning all sorts of degrading occupations that the Nabob was engaged in fifteen or twenty years ago, at the time of his first stay in Paris.

It was the third attack of that sort that the *Messager* had published within a week, and that rascal Moëssard was malicious enough to send a copy of each number under cover to Place Vendôme.

M. Jansoulet received it in the morning with his chocolate; and at the same hour his friends and his enemies — for a man like the Nabob cannot be indifferent to anybody — read it and discussed it, and adopted a line of conduct toward him calculated not to compromise themselves. That day's article must have been well loaded; for Jansoulet the coachman told us that in the Bois his master

did not exchange ten salutations in ten circuits of the lake, whereas ordinarily his hat is not on his head any more than a sovereign's when out for a drive. And when they returned home it was much worse. The three boys had just reached the house, all in tears and frightened to death, brought home from Bourdaloue College by a good Father in their own interest, poor little fellows; they had been given temporary leave of absence so that they might not hear any unkind remarks, any cruel allusions in the parlor or the courtyard. Thereupon the Nabob flew into a terrible rage, so that he demolished a whole porcelain service, and it seems that, if it had not been for M. de Géry, he would have gone off on the instant to break Moëssard's head.

"And he would have done quite right," said M. Noël, entering the room at that moment; and he, too, was greatly excited. "There's not a single word of truth in that villain's article. My master never came to Paris until last year. From Tunis to Marseille, and Marseille to Tunis, that's all the travelling he did. But that scurvy journalist is taking his revenge on us for refusing him twenty thousand francs."

"You made a very great mistake in doing that," said M. Francis, Monpavon's Francis, valet to that old dandy, whose only tooth waggles in the middle of his mouth whenever he says a word, but whom the young ladies look favorably upon all the same because of his fine manners. "Yes, you made a mistake. It is necessary to know how to handle

people carefully, as long as they are able to serve or injure us. Your Nabob turned his back on his friends too suddenly after his success; and, between you and me, my dear boy, he is n't strong enough to return such blows as that."

I thought I might venture to say a word.

"It 's quite true, Monsieur Noël, that your master is n't the same since his election. He has adopted a very different tone and manners. Day before yesterday at the *Territoriale*, he made such a hullabaloo as you can't imagine. I heard him shout in the middle of the council meeting: 'You have lied to me, you have robbed me and made me as much of a thief as yourselves. Show me your books, you pack of rascals!' If he treated Moëssard in that fashion, I don't wonder that he takes his revenge in his newspaper."

"But what does the article say, anyway?" inquired M. Barreau; "who has read it?"

No one answered. Several had tried to buy the paper; but in Paris anything scandalous sells like hot cakes. At ten o'clock in the morning there was not a copy of the *Messager* to be had on the street. Thereupon one of my nieces, a sly hussy if ever there was one, had the happy thought of looking in the pocket of one of the numerous topcoats hanging in long rows against the walls of the dressing-room.

"Here you are!" said the merry creature triumphantly, drawing from the first pocket she searched a copy of the *Messager*, crumpled at the folds as if it had been well read.

"And here's another!" cried Tom Bois-l'Héry, who was investigating on his own account. A third top-coat, a third *Messager*. And so it was with them all; buried in the depths of the pocket, or with its title sticking out, the paper was everywhere, even as the article was certain to be in every mind; and we imagined the Nabob upstairs, exchanging amiable sentences with his guests, who could have recited to him word for word the horrible things printed concerning him. We all laughed heartily at the idea; but we were dying to know the contents of that interesting page.

"Here, Père Passajon, read it aloud to us."

That was the general desire, and I complied with it.

I do not know if you are like me, but when I read aloud I gargle with my voice, so to speak, I introduce inflections and flourishes, so that I do not understand a word of what I read, like those public singers to whom the meaning of the words they sing is of little consequence provided that the notes are all there. It was called "The Flower Boat." A decidedly mixed-up story with Chinese names, relating to a very rich mandarin, newly elevated to the first class, who had once kept a "flower boat" moored on the outskirts of a town near a fortified gate frequented by soldiers. At the last word of the article we knew no more than at the beginning. To be sure, we tried to wink and to look very knowing; but, frankly, there was no ground for it. A genuine rebus without a key; and we should still be staring at it, had not old

Francis, who is the very devil for his knowledge of all sorts of things, explained to us that the fortified gate with soldiers must mean the École Militaire, and that the "flower boat" had not so pretty a name as that in good French. And he said the name aloud, despite the ladies. Such an explosion of exclamations, of "Ahs!" and "Ohs!" some saying: "I expected as much," others: "It is n't possible."

"I beg your pardon," added Francis, who was formerly a trumpeter in the 9th Lancers, Mora's and Monpavon's regiment, "I beg your pardon. Twenty years ago or more I was in barracks at the École Militaire, and I remember very well that there was near the barrier a dirty little dance-house called the Bal Jansoulet, with furnished rooms upstairs at five sous the hour, to which we used to adjourn between dances."

"You 're an infernal liar!" cried M. Noël, fairly beside himself; "a sharper and liar like your master. Jansoulet never came to Paris until this time."

Francis was sitting a little outside of the circle we made around the "marquise," sipping something sweet, because champagne is bad for his nerves, and besides, it is not a *chic* enough drink for him. He rose solemnly, without putting down his glass, and, walking up to M. Noël, said to him, quietly:

"You lack good form, my dear fellow. The other evening, at your own house, I considered your manners very vulgar and unbecoming. It

serves no purpose to insult people, especially as I 'm a fencing-master, and, if we should carry the thing any farther, I could put two inches of cold steel into your body at whatever point I chose; but I am a good sort of fellow, and instead of a sword-thrust I prefer to give you some advice which your master will do well to profit by. This is what I would do if I were in your place; I would hunt up Moëssard and buy him without haggling over the price. Hemerlingue has given him twenty thousand francs to speak, I would offer him thirty thousand to hold his tongue."

"Never, never!" roared M. Noël. "Instead of that I will go and wring the miserable bandit's neck."

"You will wring nothing at all. Whether the story is true or false, you have seen the effect of it to-night. That's a specimen of the pleasures in store for you. What do you expect, my dear fellow? You have thrown away your crutches and tried to walk alone too soon. That's all right if you 're sure of yourself and firm on your legs; but when your footing is not very good anyway, and in addition you are unlucky enough to have Hemerlingue at your heels, it 's a bad business. And with it all your master 's beginning to be short of money; he has given notes to old Schwalbach, and don't talk to me of a Nabob who gives notes. I am well aware that you have heaps of millions over yonder in Tunis; but you will have to have your election confirmed in order to get possession of them, and after a few more articles like the one

to-day, I 'll answer for it that you won't succeed. You undertake to struggle with Paris, my boy, but you 're not big enough, you know nothing about it. This is n't the Orient, and, although we don't wring the necks of people who offend us, or throw them into the water in leather bags, we have other ways of putting them out of sight. Let your master beware, Noël. One of these days Paris will swallow him as I swallow this plum, without spitting out the stone or the skin! "

Really the old man was most imposing, and, notwithstanding the paint on his face, I began to feel some respect for him. While he was speaking we heard the music overhead, the singing provided for the entertainment of the guests, and out on the square the horses of the municipal guards shaking their curb-chains. Our party must have been a very brilliant affair from outside, with the myriads of candles and the illuminated doorway. And when one thinks of the ruin that perhaps was beneath it all! We stood there in the vestibule like rats taking council together in the hold, when the vessel is beginning to take in water without the crew suspecting it, and I saw plainly enough that everybody, footmen and lady's maids, would soon scamper away at the first alarm. Can it be that such a catastrophe is possible? But in that case, what would become of me and the *Territoriale*, and my advances and my back pay?

That Francis left me with cold shivers running down my back.

XVI.

A PUBLIC MAN.

THE luminous warmth of a bright May afternoon made the lofty windows of the hôtel de Mora as hot as the glass roof of a greenhouse; its transparent hangings of blue silk could be seen from without between the branches, and its broad terraces, where the exotic flowers, brought into the air for the first time, ran like a border all the length of the quay. The great rakes scraping among the shrubs in the garden left on the gravelled paths the light footprints of summer, while the soft pattering of the water from the sprinklers on the green lawn seemed like its revivifying song.

All the magnificence of the princely abode shone resplendent in the pleasant mildness of the temperature, borrowing a grandiose beauty from the silence, the repose of that noonday hour, the only hour in the day when one did not hear carriages rumbling under the arches, the great doors of the reception-room opening and closing, and the constant vibration in the ivy on the walls caused by the pulling of bells to announce somebody's coming in or going out, like the feverish throbbing of life in the house of a leader of society. It was well

known that until three o'clock the duke received at the department; that the duchess, a Swede still benumbed by the snow of Stockholm, had hardly emerged from behind her somnolent bed-curtains; so that no one came, neither callers nor petitioners, and the footmen, perched like flamingoes on the steps of the deserted stoop, alone enlivened the scene with the slim shadows of their long legs and the yawning ennui of their idleness.

It happened however, on that day, that Jenkins' maroon-lined *coupé* was waiting in a corner of the courtyard. The duke, who had been feeling badly the day before, felt still worse when he left the breakfast table, and lost no time in sending for the man of the pearls in order to question him concerning his singular condition. He had no pain anywhere, slept well and had his usual appetite; but there was a most extraordinary sensation of weariness and of terrible cold, which nothing could overcome. So it was that, at that moment, notwithstanding the lovely spring sunshine which flooded his room and put to shame the flame blazing on his hearth as in the depth of winter, the duke was shivering in his blue firs, between his little screens, and as he wrote his name on divers documents for a clerk from his office, on a low lacquered table that stood so near the fire that the lacquer came off in scales, he kept holding his benumbed fingers to the blaze, which might have scorched them on the surface without restoring circulation and life to their bloodless rigidity.

Was it anxiety caused by the indisposition of his illustrious patient? At all events Jenkins seemed nervous, excited, strode up and down the room, prying and sniffing to right and left, trying to find in the air something that he believed to be there, something subtle and intangible, like the faint trace of a perfume or the invisible mark left by a passing bird. He could hear the wood snapping on the hearth, the sound of papers hastily turned, the duke's indolent voice, indicating in a word or two, always concise and clear, the answer to a letter of four pages, and the clerk's respectful monosyllables: "Yes, Monsieur le Ministre." "No, Monsieur le Ministre." Outside, the swallows whistled merrily over the water, and some one was playing a clarinet in the direction of the bridges.

"It is impossible," said the minister abruptly, rising from his chair. "Take them away, Lartigues. You can come again, to-morrow. I can't write, I am too cold. Just feel my hands, doctor, and tell me if you would not say they were just out of a pail of iced water. My whole body has been like that for two days. It's absurd enough in such weather!"

"It doesn't surprise me," growled the Irishman in a surly, short tone, very unusual in that mellifluous voice.

The door had closed behind the young clerk, who carried away his documents with a majestic stiffness of bearing, but was very happy, I fancy, to feel that he was at liberty, and to have the opportunity, before returning to the department,

to saunter for an hour or two in the Tuileries, overflowing at that hour with spring dresses and pretty girls seated around the still unoccupied chairs of the musicians under the flowering chestnut trees, which quivered from top to bottom with the glad thrill of the month of nests. He was not frozen, not he.

Jenkins examined his patient without speaking, ausculted him, percussed him, then, in the same rough tone, which might possibly be ascribed to anxious affection, to the irritation of the physician who finds that his instructions have been disregarded, he said:

"In God's name, my dear Duke, what sort of a life have you been leading lately?"

He knew from ante-room gossips — the doctor did not despise them in the households of those of his patients with whom he was on intimate terms — he knew that the duke had a *new one*, that this caprice of recent date had taken possession of him, excited him to an unusual degree, and that information, added to other observations made in other directions, had sown in Jenkins' mind a suspicion, a mad desire to know the name of this *new one*. That is what he was trying to read on his patient's pale brow, seeking the subject of his thoughts rather than the cause of his illness. But he had to do with one of those faces peculiar to men who are successful with women, faces as hermetically sealed as the caskets with secret compartments which contain women's jewels and letters, — one of those reticent natures locked with a

cold, limpid glance, a glance of steel against which the most perspicacious cunning is powerless.

"You are mistaken, Doctor," replied His Excellency calmly, "I have not changed my habits in any respect."

"Very good! you have done wrong, Monsieur le Duc," said the Irishman bluntly, furious at his inability to discover anything.

But the next moment, realizing that he had gone too far, he tempered his ill-humor and the brutality of his diagnosis with a bolus of trite, axiomatic observations. — He must be careful. Medicine was not magic. The power of the Jenkins Pearls was limited by human strength, the necessities of advancing age, the resources of nature, which, unhappily, are not inexhaustible. The duke interrupted him nervously:

"Come, come, Jenkins, you know that I don't like fine phrases. They don't go with me. What is the matter with me? What is the cause of this coldness?"

"It's anæmia, exhaustion — a lowering of the oil in the lamp."

"What must I do?"

"Nothing. Absolute rest. Eat and sleep, nothing more. If you could go and pass a few weeks at Grandbois — "

Mora shrugged his shoulders.

"What about the Chamber, and the Council, and — Nonsense! as if it were possible!"

"At all events, Monsieur le Duc, you must put on the drag, as someone said, you must absolutely give up — "

Jenkins was interrupted by the entrance of the usher, who glided softly into the room on tiptoe, like a dancing-master, and handed a letter and a card to the minister who was still shivering in front of the fire. When he saw that envelope, of a satiny shade of gray, and of peculiar shape, the Irishman involuntarily started, while the duke, having opened his letter and glanced over it, rose to his feet full of animation, on his cheeks the faint flush of factitious health which all the heat from the fire had failed to bring to them.

"My dear Doctor, you must at any cost —"

The usher was standing near, waiting.

"What is it? — Oh! yes, this card. Show him into the gallery, I will be there in a moment."

The Duc de Mora's gallery, which was open to visitors twice a week, was to him a sort of neutral territory, a public place where he could see anybody on earth without binding himself to anything or compromising himself. Then, when the usher had left the room:

"Jenkins, my good friend, you have already performed miracles for me. I ask you to perform another. Double my dose of the pearls, think up something, whatever you choose. But I must be in condition Sunday. You understand, in perfect condition."

And his hot, feverish fingers closed upon the little note he held with a shudder of longing.

"Beware, Monsieur le Duc," said Jenkins, very pale, his lips pressed tightly together, "I have no desire to alarm you beyond measure concerning your weak state, but it is my duty —"

Mora smiled, a charming, mischievous smile.

"Your duty and my pleasure are two, my good fellow. Let me burn my life at both ends if it amuses me. I have never had such a fine opportunity as I have now."

He started.

"The duchess!"

A door under the hangings had opened, giving passage to a dishevelled little head of fair hair, like a mass of vapor amid the laces and furbelows of a royal *déshabillé.*

"What is this I hear? You have n't gone out? Pray scold him, Doctor. Is n't he foolish to listen to his own fears so much? Just look at him. He looks in superb health."

"There! You see," said the duke, with a laugh, to the Irishman. "Are n't you coming in, Duchess?"

"No, I am going to take you away, on the contrary. My uncle d'Estaing has sent me a cage filled with birds from the Indies. I want to show them to you. Marvels of all colors, with little eyes like black pearls. And so cold, so cold, almost as sensitive to cold as you are."

"Let us go and see them," said the minister. "Wait for me, Jenkins; I will come back."

Then, realizing that he still had his letter in his hand, he tossed it carelessly into the drawer of the little table on which he had been signing documents, and went out behind the duchess, with the perfect *sang-froid* of a husband accustomed to such manœuvres. What marvellously skilful work-

man, what incomparable maker of toys was able to endow the human countenance with its flexibility, its wonderful elasticity? Nothing could be prettier than that great nobleman's face, surprised with his adultery on his lips, the cheeks inflamed by the vision of promised delights, and suddenly assuming a serene expression of conjugal affection; nothing could be finer than the hypocritical humility of Jenkins, his paternal smile in the duchess's presence, giving place instantly when he was left alone, to a savage expression of wrath and hatred, a criminal pallor, the pallor of a Castaing or a Lapommerais devising his sinister schemes.

A swift glance at each of the doors, and in a twinkling he stood before the drawer filled with valuable papers, in which the little gold key was allowed to remain with an insolent negligence that seemed to say:

"No one will dare."

But Jenkins dared.

The letter was there, on top of a pile of others. The texture of the paper, the three words of the address dashed off in a plain, bold hand, and the perfume, that intoxicating, conjuring perfume, the very breath from her divine mouth. So it was true, his jealous love had not led him astray, nor her evident embarrassment in his presence for some time past, nor Constance's mysterious, youthful airs, nor the superb bouquets strewn about the studio, as in the mysterious shadow of a sin. So that indomitable pride had surrendered at last!

But in that case why not to him, Jenkins? He who had loved her so long, always in fact, who was ten years younger than the other, and who certainly was no shiverer? All those thoughts rushed through his brain like arrows shot from a tireless bow. And he stood there, riddled with wounds, torn with emotion, his eyes blinded with blood, staring at the little cold, soft envelope which he dared not open for fear of removing one last doubt, when a rustling of the hangings, which made him hastily toss the letter back and close the smoothly-running drawer of the lacquer table, warned him that somebody had entered the room.

"Hallo! is it you, Jansoulet? How came you here?"

"His Excellency told me to come and wait for him in his bedroom," replied the Nabob, very proud to be thus admitted to the sanctuary of the private apartments, especially at an hour when the minister did not receive. The fact was that the duke was beginning to show a genuine, sympathetic feeling for that savage. For several reasons: in the first place he liked audacious, pushing fellows, lucky adventurers. Was he not one himself? And then the Nabob amused him; his accent, his unvarnished manners, his flattery, a trifle unblushing and impudent, gave him a respite from the everlasting conventionality of his surroundings, from that scourge of administrative and court ceremonial which he held in horror, — the conventional phrase, — in so great horror that he never finished the period he had begun. The

Nabob, for his part, finished his in unforeseen ways that were sometimes full of surprises; he was a first-rate gambler too, losing games of écarté at five thousand francs the turn, at the club on Rue Royale, without winking. And then he was so convenient when one wanted to get rid of a picture, always ready to buy, no matter at what price. These motives of condescending amiability had been reinforced latterly by a feeling of pity and indignation because of the persistent ferocity with which the poor fellow was being persecuted, because of the cowardly, merciless war upon him, which was carried on so skilfully that public opinion, always credulous, always putting out its neck to see how the wind is blowing, was beginning to be seriously influenced. We must do Mora the justice to say that he was no follower of the crowd. When he saw the Nabob's face, always good-humored, but wearing a piteous, discomfited look, in a corner of the gallery, it had occurred to him that it was cowardly to receive him there, and he had told him to go up to his room.

Jenkins and Jansoulet, being decidedly embarrassed in each other's presence, exchanged a few commonplace words. Their warm friendship had grown sensibly cooler of late, Jansoulet having flatly refused any further subsidy to the Work of Bethlehem, thereby leaving the enterprise on the Irishman's hands; he was furious at that defection, much more furious just then because he had been unable to open Felicia's letter before the intruder's arrival. The Nabob, for his part, was wondering

whether the doctor was to be present at the conversation he wished to have with the duke on the subject of the infamous allusions with which the *Messager* was hounding him; he was anxious also to know whether those calumnies had cooled the all-powerful goodwill, which would be so necessary to him in the confirmation of his election. The welcome he had received in the gallery had partly quieted his fears; they vanished altogether when the duke returned and came toward him with outstretched hand.

"Well, well! my poor Jansoulet, I should say that Paris is making you pay dear for her welcome. What a tempest of scolding and hatred and bad temper!"

"Ah! Monsieur le Duc, if you knew—"

"I do know—I have read it all," said the minister, drawing near the fire.

"I trust that your Excellency does n't believe those infamous stories. At all events I have here—I have brought proofs."

With his strong hairy hands trembling with emotion, he fumbled among the papers in an enormous portfolio that he had under his arm.

"Never mind—never mind. I know all about it. I know that, purposely or not, they have confused you with another person whom family reasons—"

The duke could not restrain a smile in face of the utter bewilderment of the Nabob, who was astounded to find him so well informed.

"A minister of State should know everything.

But never fear. Your election shall be confirmed, all the same. And when it is once confirmed — "

Jansoulet drew a long breath of relief.

" Ah! Monsieur le Duc, how much good you do me by talking to me thus. I was beginning to lose all my confidence. My enemies are so powerful! And on top of all the rest there 's another piece of ill-luck. Le Merquier, of all people, is assigned to make the report concerning my election."

" Le Merquier? — the devil! "

" Yes, Le Merquier, Hemerlingue's confidential man, the vile hypocrite who converted the baroness, doubtless because his religion forbids him to have a Mohammedan for his mistress."

" Fie, fie, Jansoulet! "

" What can you expect, Monsieur le Duc? You lose your temper sometimes, too. Just think of the position those villains are putting me in. A week ago my election should have been confirmed, and they have postponed the meeting of the committee purposely, because they know the terrible plight I am in, with all my fortune paralyzed, and the bey waiting for the decision of the Chamber to know whether he can strip me clean or not. I have eighty millions over there, Monsieur le Duc, and here I am beginning to be in need of money. If this lasts a little longer — "

He wiped away the great drops of perspiration that were rolling down his cheeks.

" Very well! I will make this matter of your confirmation my business," said the minister with

much animation. "I will write to What's-his-name to hurry up his report; and even if I have to be carried to the Chamber —"

"Is your Excellency ill?" queried Jansoulet in a tone of deep interest, in which there was no lack of sincerity, I promise you.

"No — a little weakness. We are a little short of blood; but Jenkins is going to give us a new supply. Eh, Jenkins?"

The Irishman, who was not listening, made a vague gesture.

"Thunder! And to think that I have too much blood!" And the Nabob loosened his cravat around his swollen neck, on the verge of apoplexy with excitement and the heat of the room. "If I could only let you have a little, Monsieur le Duc!"

"It would be fortunate for both of us," rejoined the minister with a touch of irony. "For you especially; you are such a violent fellow and at this moment need to be so calm. Look out for that, Jansoulet. Be on your guard against the traps, the fits of passion they would like to drive you into. Say to yourself now that you are a public man, standing on an elevation, and that all your gestures can be seen from a distance. The newspapers insult you; don't read them if you cannot conceal the emotion they cause you. Don't do what I did with my blind man on Pont de la Concorde, that horrible clarinet player, who has made my life a burden for ten years, whistling at me every day: *De tes fils, Norma.* I tried every-

thing to make him go away, money, threats. Nothing would induce him to go. The police? Oh! yes. With our modern ideas, to turn a poor blind man off his bridge would become a momentous affair. The opposition newspapers would speak of it, the Parisians would make a fable of it. *The Cobbler and the Financier; The Duke and the Clarinet.* I must resign myself to it. Indeed, it's my own fault. I should not have shown the fellow that he annoyed me. I am confident that my torture is half of his life now. Every morning he leaves his hovel with his dog, his folding-stool and his horrible instrument, and says to himself: 'Now I'll go and make life a burden to the Duc de Mora.' Not a day does he miss, the villain. Look you! if I should open the window a crack, you would hear that deluge of shrill little notes above the noise of the water and the carriages. Very well! this *Messager* man is your clarinet; if you let him see that his music wearies you, he will never stop. By the way, my dear deputy, let me remind you that you have a committee meeting at three o'clock, and I shall see you very soon in the Chamber."

Then, turning to Jenkins, he added: "You know what I asked you for, Doctor, — pearls for day after to-morrow. And well loaded!"

Jenkins started and shook himself, as if suddenly aroused from a dream.

"I understand, my dear Duke; I'll supply you with breath — oh! breath enough to win the Derby."

He bowed, and went away, laughing, a genuine wolf's laugh, showing his white, parted teeth. The Nabob also took his leave, his heart overflowing with gratitude, but not daring to allow that sceptic to see anything of it, for any sort of demonstration aroused his distrust. And the Minister of State, left alone, crouching in front of the crackling, blazing fire, sheltered by the velvety warmth of his luxurious garments, lined on that day by the feverish caress of a lovely May sun, began to shiver anew, to shiver so violently that Felicia's letter, which he held open in his blue fingers and read with amorous zest, trembled with a rustling noise as of silk.

A very peculiar situation is that of a deputy in the period which follows his election and precedes — as they say in Parliamentary parlance — the verification of his credentials. It bears some resemblance to the plight of a husband during the twenty-four hours between the marriage at the mayor's office and its consecration by the Church. Rights one cannot use, a semi-happiness, semi-privileges, the annoyance of having to hold oneself in check in one direction or another, the lack of a definite standing. You are married without being married, a deputy without being sure of it; but, in the case of the deputy, that uncertainty is prolonged for days and weeks, and the longer it lasts the more problematical the result becomes; and it is downright torture for the unfortunate representative on trial to be obliged to go to the

Chamber, to occupy a seat which he may not keep, to listen to debates whose conclusion he is likely not to hear, to implant in his eyes and ears the delightful memory of parliamentary sessions, with their ocean of bald or apoplectic heads, the endless noise of crumpled paper, the shouts of the pages, the drumming of paper knives on the tables, and the hum of private conversations, above which the orator's voice soars in a timid or vociferous solo with a continuous accompaniment.

That situation, disheartening enough at best, was made worse for the Nabob by the calumnious stories, whispered at first, now printed and put in circulation by thousands of copies, which resulted in his being tacitly quarantined by his colleagues. At first he went about in the corridors, to the library, to the restaurant, to the Salle des Conférences, like the others, overjoyed to leave his footprints in every corner of that majestic labyrinth; but, being a stranger to the majority, cut by some members of the club on Rue Royale, who avoided him, detested by the whole clerical coterie, of which Le Merquier was the leader, and by the financial clique, naturally hostile to that billionaire, with his power to cause a rise or fall in stocks, like the vessels of large tonnage which divert the channel in a harbor, his isolation was simply emphasized by change of locality, and the same hostility accompanied him everywhere.

His movements, his bearing were marked by a sort of constraint, of hesitating distrust. He felt that he was watched. If he entered the restaurant

for a moment, that great light room looking on the gardens of the presidency, which he liked because there, at the broad white marble counter laden with food and drink, the deputies laid aside their imposing, high and mighty airs, the legislative haughtiness became more affable, recalled to naturalness by nature, he knew that a sneering, insulting item would appear in the *Messager* the next morning, holding him up to his constituents as "a wine-bibber *emeritus*."

They were another source of vexation to him, — those terrible constituents.

They came in flocks, invaded the Salle des Pas-Perdus, galloped about in all directions like excited little black kids, calling from one end to the other of the echoing hall: "O Pé! O Tché!" inhaling with delight the odor of government, of administration that filled the air, making eyes at the ministers who passed, sniffing at their heels, as if some prebend were about to fall from their venerable pockets, from their swollen portfolios; but crowding around "Moussiou" Jansoulet especially, with so many urgent petitions, demands, demonstrations, that, in order to rid himself of that gesticulating mob at which everybody turned to look, and which made him seem like the delegate of a tribe of Touaregs in the midst of a civilized people, he was obliged to glance imploringly at some usher who was skilled in the art of rescue under such circumstances and would come to him in a great hurry and say, "that he was wanted immediately in the eighth committee." So that the poor

Nabob, persecuted everywhere, driven from the corridors, the Pas-Perdus, the restaurant, had adopted the course of never leaving his bench, where he sat motionless and mute throughout the sitting.

He had, however, one friend in the Chamber, — a deputy newly elected for Deux-Sèvres, named M. Sarigue, a poor fellow not unlike the inoffensive, ignoble animal whose name he bore,[1] with his sparse, red hair, his frightened eyes, his hopping gait in his white gaiters. He was so shy that he could not say two words without stammering, almost tongue-tied, incessantly rolling balls of chewing-gum around in his mouth, which put the finishing touch to the viscosity of his speech; and every one wondered why such an impotent creature had cared to become a member of the Assembly, what delirious female ambition had spurred on to public office a man so unfitted for the least important private function.

By an amusing manifestation of the irony of fate, Jansoulet, who was intensely agitated by the uncertainty concerning his own confirmation, was chosen by the eighth committee to make the report on the Deux-Sèvres election, and M. Sarigue, realizing his incapacity, full of a ghastly dread of being sent back in disgrace to his own fireside, prowled humbly and beseechingly around that tall, curly haired worthy, whose broad shoulder-blades moved back and forth like the bellows of a forge under his fine tightly fitting frock-coat, little sus-

[1] A *sarigue* is an opossum.

pecting that a poor, worried creature like himself was hidden beneath that solid envelope.

As he worked at the report of the election at Deux-Sèvres, going over the numerous protests, the charges of electoral trickery, banquets given, money squandered, casks of wine broached in front of the mayor's office, the usual manœuvres of an election in those days, Jansoulet shuddered on his own account. "Why, I did all that!" he said to himself in dismay. Ah! M. Sarigue need have no fear, he could never have put his hand upon a more kindly-disposed judge or a more indulgent one, for the Nabob, moved to pity for his patient, knowing by experience how painful the agony of suspense is, did his work with all possible haste, and the huge portfolio that he had under his arm when he left the hôtel de Mora, contained his report, all ready to be read to the Committee.

Whether it was the thought of that first essay as a public officer, or the duke's kind words, or the magnificent weather, which was keenly enjoyed by that Southerner whose impressions were wholly physical, and who was accustomed to transact business in the warm sunlight and beneath the blue sky, — certain it is that the ushers of the Corps Législatif beheld that day a superb and haughty Jansoulet whom they had not known before. Old Hemerlingue's carriage, recognizable by the unusual width of its doors, of which he caught a glimpse through the iron railing, was all that was needed to put him in full possession of his natural assurance and audacity.

"The enemy is at hand. Attention!" As he walked through the Salle des Pas-Perdus, he saw the financier talking in a corner with Le Merquier, the judge of his election, passed close by them and stared at them with a triumphant air which made them wonder: "What in God's name has happened to him?"

Then, enchanted by his own *sang-froid*, he walked toward the committee-rooms, vast, high apartments, opening from both sides of a long corridor, furnished with huge tables covered with green cloths and heavy chairs of uniform pattern which bore the stamp of wearisome solemnity. He reached his destination. Men were standing about in groups, discussing, gesticulating, exchanging salutations and grasps of the hand, throwing back their heads, like Chinese shadows, against the bright background of the windows. There were some who walked alone, with backs bent, as if crushed by the weight of thoughts that furrowed their brows. Others whispered in one another's ears, imparting excessively mysterious information of the utmost importance, putting a finger to their lips, screwing up their eyes to enjoin secrecy. A provincial flavor distinguished them all, with differences of inflection, Southern excitability, the drawling accent of the Centre, Breton sing-song, all blended in the same idiotic, strutting self-sufficiency; frock-coats after the style of Landerneau, mountain shoes, and homespun linen; the monumental assurance of village clubs, local expressions, provincialisms abruptly

imported into political and administrative language, the limp, colorless phraseology which invented "the burning questions returning to the surface," and "individualities without a commission."

To see those worthies, excited or pensive as the case might be, you would have said that they were the greatest breeders of ideas on earth; unluckily, on the days when the Chamber was in session they were transformed, they clung coyly to their benches, as frightened as school-boys under the master's ferule, laughing obsequiously at the jests of the man of wit who presided over them, or taking the floor to put forward the most amazing propositions, or for interruptions of the sort that make one think that it was not a type simply, but a whole race that Henri Monnier stigmatized in his immortal sketch. Two or three orators in the whole Chamber, the rest well skilled in the art of planting themselves before the fire in a provincial salon, after an excellent repast at the prefect's table, and saying in a nasal tone: "The administration, Messieurs," or "The Emperor's government," — but incapable of going farther.

On ordinary occasions the good-natured Nabob allowed himself to be dazzled by those attitudes, that clattering noise as of an empty spinning-wheel; but to-day he found himself on a level with the others. As he sat at the centre of the green table, his portfolio before him, his two elbows firmly planted upon it, reading the report drawn by de Géry, the members of the committee stared at him in mute amazement.

It was a clear, concise, rapid summary of their labors of the past fortnight, in which they found their ideas so well expressed that they had great difficulty in recognizing them. Then, when two or three among them suggested that the report was too favorable, that he glided too lightly over certain protests that had reached the committee, the maker of the report spoke with surprising assurance, with the prolixity and exuberance of men of his province, proved that a deputy should not be held responsible beyond a certain point for the imprudence of his electoral agents, that otherwise no election would stand against an investigation that was at all minute; and as, in reality, he was pleading his own cause, he displayed an irresistible warmth and conviction, taking care to let fly from time to time one of the long meaningless substantives with a thousand claws, of the sort that the committee liked.

The others listened, deep in thought, exchanging their impressions by nods of the head, drawing flourishes and faces on their blotting-pads the better to fix their attention; a detail that harmonized with the schoolboy-like noise in the corridors, a muttering as of lessons being recited, and the flocks of sparrows chirping under the windows in a flagged courtyard surrounded by arches, a veritable school-yard. The report adopted, they sent for M. Sarigue to make some supplementary explanations. He appeared, pale-faced, abashed, stammering like a criminal before conviction, and you would have laughed to see the patronizing,

authoritative air with which Jansoulet encouraged and reassured him: "Be calm, my dear colleague." But the members of the eighth committee did not laugh. They were all, or almost all, of the Sarigue species, two or three being absolutely nerveless, afflicted with partial loss of the power of speech. Such self-assurance, such eloquence had aroused their enthusiasm.

When Jansoulet left the Corps Législatif, escorted to his carriage by his grateful colleague, it was about six o'clock. The superb weather, a gorgeous sunset over by the Trocadéro, across the Seine, which shone like burnished gold, tempted that robust plebeian, whom the conventional proprieties of his position compelled to ride in a carriage and to wear gloves, but who dispensed with them as often as possible, to return on foot. He sent away his servants, and started across Pont de la Concorde, his leather satchel under his arm. He had known no such feeling of contentment since the first of May. Throwing back his shoulders, with his hat tipped slightly back in the attitude he had noticed in men who were worried, overdone with business, allowing all the toil-born fever of their brain to evaporate in the fresh air, as a factory discharges its vapor into the gutter at the close of a day of labor, he walked on among other figures like his own, evidently just from the pillared temple that faces the Madeleine beyond the monumental fountains of the square. As they passed, people turned and said: "They are deputies." And Jansoulet felt a childlike

joy, a vulgar joy compounded of ignorance and ingenuous vanity.

"Buy the *Messager*, evening edition."

The words came from the newspaper booth at the end of the bridge, filled at that hour with piles of freshly printed sheets which two women were hastily folding and which smelt of the damp press, of the latest news, the triumph of the day or its scandal. Almost all the deputies purchased a copy as they passed, and ran through it rapidly, hoping to find their names. Jansoulet, for his part, dreaded to see his and did not stop. But suddenly he thought: "Ought not a public man to be above such weaknesses as this? I am strong enough to read anything now." He retraced his steps and took a paper like his colleagues. He opened it very calmly at the place usually occupied by Moëssard's articles. There was one there. Still the same title: *Chinoiseries*, and an M. for signature.

"Aha!" said the public man, as unmoved and cold as marble, with a fine, scornful smile. Mora's lesson was still ringing in his ears, and even if he had forgotten it, the air from *Norma* in jerky, ironical little notes not far away would have sufficed to remind him of it. But, however carefully we may make our calculations in the rush of events in our lives, we must still reckon with the unforeseen; and that is why the Nabob suddenly found himself blinded by a rush of blood to his eyes, while a cry of rage was stifled by the sudden contraction of his throat. His mother, his old

Françoise, was dragged into the infamous jest of the "flower boat" at last. How well that Moëssard aimed, how well he knew the really sensitive spots in that heart, so innocently laid bare!

"Be calm, Jansoulet, be calm."

In vain did he repeat the injunction in every tone, — anger, furious anger, the drunkenness of blood demanding blood enveloped him. His first impulse was to stop a cab and hurl himself into it, in order to escape the irritating street, to rid his body of the necessity of walking and choosing a path — to stop a cab as for a wounded man. But at that hour of general home-coming the square was crowded with hundreds of victorias, calèches, coupés, descending from the resplendent glory of the Arc-de-Triomphe toward the purple freshness of the Tuileries, crowding closely upon one another down the inclined surface of the avenue to the great cross-roads where the motionless statues, standing firmly on their pedestals with their wreath-encircled brows, watched them diverge toward Faubourg Saint-Germain, Rue Royale and Rue de Rivoli.

Jansoulet, newspaper in hand, made his way through the uproar, without thinking of it, bending his steps instinctively toward the club, where he went every day to play cards from six to seven. He was a public man still; but intensely excited, talking aloud, stammering oaths and threats in a voice that suddenly became soft once more as he thought of the dear old woman. — To think of rolling her in the mire too! Oh! if she should read it, if she could understand! What punishment

could he invent for such an infamous outrage? He reached Rue Royale, where equipages of all sorts returning from the Bois bowled swiftly homeward, with whirling axles, visions of veiled women and children's curly heads, bringing a little vegetable mould to the pavements of Paris and whiffs of spring mingled with the perfume of rice-powder. In front of the Ministry of Marine, a phaeton perched very high upon slender wheels, bearing a strong resemblance to a huge field-spider, the little groom clinging behind and the two persons on the box-seat forming its body, came very near colliding with the sidewalk as it turned.

The Nabob raised his head, and restrained an exclamation.

Beside a painted hussy with red hair, wearing a tiny little hat with broad ribbons, who, from her perch on her leather cushion, was driving the horse with her hands, her eyes, her whole made-up person, stiffly erect, yet leaning forward, sat Moëssard, Moëssard the dandy, pink-cheeked and painted like his companion, raised on the same dung-heap, fattened on the same vices. The strumpet and the journalist, and she was not the one of the two who sold herself most shamelessly! Towering above the women lolling in their calèches, the men who sat opposite them buried under flounces, all the attitudes of fatigue and ennui which they whose appetites are sated display in public as if in scorn of pleasure and wealth, they insolently exhibited themselves, she very proud to drive the queen's lover, and he without the

slightest shame beside that creature who flicked her whip at men in passage-ways, safe on her lofty perch from the salutary drag-nets of the police. Perhaps he found it necessary to quicken his royal mistress's pulses by thus parading under her windows with Suzanne Bloch, *alias* Suze la Rousse.

"Hi! hi there!"

The horse, a tall trotter with slender legs, a genuine cocotte's horse, was returning from his digression, toward the middle of the street, with dancing steps, prancing gracefully up and down without going forward. Jansoulet dropped his satchel, and as if he had cast aside at the same time all his gravity, his prestige as a public man, he gave a mighty leap and grasped the animal's bit, holding him fast with his strong hairy hands.

An arrest on Rue Royale and in broad daylight; no one but that Tartar would have dared do such a thing!

"Get down," he said to Moëssard, whose face turned green and yellow in spots when he recognized him. "Get down at once."

"Will you let go my horse, you fat beast! — Lash him, Suzanne, it's the Nabob."

She tried to gather up the reins, but the animal, held in a powerful grasp, reared so suddenly that in another second the fragile vehicle would have shot out all that it contained, like a sling. Thereupon, carried away by one of the furious fits of rage peculiar to the faubourg, which in such girls as she scale off the varnish of their luxury and their false skin, she struck the Nabob two blows with her

whip, which glided off the hard, tanned face, but gave it a ferocious expression, accentuated by the short nose, slit at the end like a hunting terrier's, which had turned white.

"Get down, or, by God, I will overturn the whole thing!"

In a confused mass of carriages, standing still because movement was impossible or slowly skirting the obstacle, with thousands of curious eyes, amid the shouts of drivers and clashing of bits, two iron wrists shook the whole phaeton.

"Jump down — jump, I say — don't you see he 's going to tip us over? What a grip!"

And the girl gazed at the Hercules with interest.

Moessard had hardly put his foot to the ground, when, before he could take refuge on the sidewalk, where black *képis* were hastening to the scene, Jansoulet threw himself upon him, lifted him by the nape of the neck like a rabbit, and exclaimed, heedless of his protestations, his terrified, stammering entreaties:

"Yes, yes, I 'll give you satisfaction, you miserable scoundrel. But first I propose to do to you what we do to dirty beasts so that they sha'n't come back again."

And he began to rub him, to scrub his face mercilessly with his newspaper, which he held like a *tampon* and with which he choked and blinded him and made great raw spots where the paint bled. They dragged him from his hands, purple and breathless. If he had worked himself up a little more, he would have killed him.

The scuffle at an end, the Nabob pulled down his sleeves, which had risen to his elbows, smoothed his rumpled linen, picked up his satchel from which the papers relating to the Sarigue election had scattered as far as the gutter, and replied to the police officers, who asked him his name in order to prepare their report: "Bernard Jansoulet, Deputy for Corsica."

A public man!

Not until then did he remember that he was one. Who would have suspected it, to see him thus, out of breath and bareheaded, like a porter after a street fight, under the inquisitive, coldly contemptuous glances of the slowly dispersing crowd?

XVII.

THE APPARITION.

IF you wish for sincere, straightforward passion, if you wish for effusive demonstrations of affection, laughter, the laughter of great happiness, which differs from tears only in a very slight movement of the mouth, if you wish for the fascinating folly of youth illumined by bright eyes, so transparent that you can look to the very bottom of the soul, there are all of those to be seen this Sunday morning in a house that you know, a new house on the outskirts of the old faubourg. The show-case on the ground-floor is more brilliant than usual. The signs over the door dance about more airily than ever, and through the open windows issue joyous cries, a soaring heavenward of happiness.

"Accepted, it's accepted! Oh! what luck! Henriette, Élise, come, come! M. Maranne's play is accepted."

André has known the news since yesterday. Cardailhac, the manager of the Nouveautés, sent for him to inform him that his play would be put in rehearsal at once and produced next month. They passed the evening discussing the stage setting, the distribution of parts; and, as it was too late

to knock at his neighbors' door when he returned from the theatre, he waited for morning with feverish impatience, and as soon as he heard signs of life below, the blinds thrown back against the house-front, he hurried down to tell his friends the good news. And now they are all together, the young ladies in modest *déshabillé*, their hair hastily braided, and M. Joyeuse, whom the announcement had surprised in the act of shaving, presenting an astonishing bipartite face beneath his embroidered night-cap, with one side shaved, the other not. But the most excited of all is André Maranne, for you know what the acceptance of *Révolte* meant to him, what agreement Grandmamma had made with him. The poor fellow looks at her as if seeking encouragement in her eyes; and those eyes, kindly as always, and with a slight suggestion of raillery, seem to say to him: "Try, at all events. What do you risk?" He also glances, in order to give himself courage, at Mademoiselle Élise, pretty as a flower, her long lashes lowered. At last, making a bold effort, he says, in a choking voice:

"Monsieur Joyeuse, I have a very serious communication to make to you."

M. Joyeuse is surprised.

"A communication? *Mon Dieu!* you terrify me."

And he too lowers his voice as he adds:

"Are these young ladies in the way?"

No. Grandmamma knows what is going on. Mademoiselle Élise, too, must have a suspicion. That leaves only the children. Mademoiselle Hen-

riette and her sister are requested to retire, which they do at once, the former with a majestic, annoyed air, like a worthy descendant of the Saint-Amands, the other, the little monkey Yaia, with a wild desire to laugh, dissembled with difficulty.

Profound silence ensues. Then the lover begins his little story.

I should say that Mademoiselle Élise does in very truth suspect something, for as soon as their young neighbor spoke of a "communication," she had taken her *Ansart et Rendu* from her pocket and plunged madly into the adventures of a certain Le Hutin, an exciting passage which made the book tremble in her fingers. Surely there is cause for trembling in the dismay, the indignant amazement with which M. Joyeuse welcomes this request for his daughter's hand.

"Is it possible? How did this come about? What an extraordinary thing! Whoever would have suspected anything of the sort!"

And suddenly the good man bursts into a roar of laughter. Well, no, that is not true. He has known what was going on for a long while; some one told him the whole story.

Father knows the whole story! Then Grandmamma must have betrayed them. And the culprit comes forward smiling to meet the reproachful glances that are turned in her direction.

"Yes, my dears, I did. The secret was too heavy. I could not keep it all by myself. And then father is so dear, one cannot conceal anything from him."

As she says this, she leaps on the little man's neck, but it is large enough for two, and when Mademoiselle Élise takes refuge there in her turn, there is an affectionate, fatherly hand extended to him whom M. Joyeuse looks upon thenceforth as his son.

Silent embraces, long searching glances, melting or passionate, blissful moments which one would like to detain forever by the tips of their fragile wings! They talk, they laugh softly as they recall certain incidents. M. Joyeuse tells how the secret was revealed to him at first by rapping spirits, one day when he was alone in André's room. "How is business, Monsieur Maranne?" the spirits inquired, and he answered in Maranne's absence: "Not so bad for the season, Messieurs Spirits." You should see the mischievous air with which the little man repeats: "Not so bad for the season," while Mademoiselle Élise, sadly confused at the thought that it was her father with whom she was corresponding that day, disappears beneath her flaxen curls.

After the first excitement has passed and their voices are steady once more, they talk more seriously. It is certain that Madame Joyeuse, *née* de Saint-Amand, would never have consented to the marriage. André Maranne is not rich, far less of noble blood; but luckily the old book-keeper has not the same ideas of grandeur that his wife had. They love each other, they are young, healthy and virtuous, qualities which constitute a handsome dowry and one which the notary will not make a

heavy charge for recording. The new household will take up its abode on the floor above. They will continue the photographing business unless the receipts from *Révolte* are enormous. (The *Imaginaire* can be trusted to attend to that.) In any event, the father will be always at hand, he has a good place with his broker and some expert work at the Palais de Justice; if the small vessel sails always in the wake of the larger one, all will go well, with the help of the waves, the wind and the stars.

A single question disturbs M. Joyeuse: "Will André's parents consent to this marriage? How can Dr. Jenkins, rich and famous as he is — "

"Let us not speak of that man," exclaims André, turning pale; "he's a miserable villain to whom I owe nothing, who is nothing to me."

He pauses, a little embarrassed by this explosion of wrath, which he could not hold back and cannot explain, and continues in a milder tone:

"My mother, who comes to see me sometimes, although she has been forbidden to do so, was the first to be informed of our plans. She already loves Mademoiselle Élise like her own daughter. You will see, Mademoiselle, how good she is, and how lovely and charming. What a misfortune that she belongs to such a vile man, who tyrannizes over her and tortures her so far as to forbid her mentioning her son's name!"

Poor Maranne heaves a sigh which tells the whole story of the great sorrow he conceals in the depths of his heart. But what melancholy can

endure before the dear face illumined by fair curls and the radiant outlook for the future? The serious questions decided, they can open the door and recall the banished children. In order not to fill those little heads with thoughts beyond their years, they have agreed to say nothing of the prodigious event, to tell them nothing except that they must dress in haste and eat their breakfast even more hurriedly, so that they can pass the afternoon at the Bois, where Maranne will read his play to them, awaiting the hour to go to Suresnes for a fish-dinner at Kontzen's; a long programme of delights in honor of the acceptance of *Révolte* and of another piece of good news which they shall know later.

"Ah! indeed. What can it be?" query the two children with an innocent air.

But if you fancy that they do not know what is in the wind, if you think that, when Mademoiselle Élise struck three blows on the ceiling, they believed that she did it for the special purpose of inquiring about the photographing business, you are even more ingenuous than Père Joyeuse.

"Never mind, never mind, mesdemoiselles. Go and dress."

Thereupon another refrain begins:

"What dress must I wear, Grandmamma? The gray?"

"Grandmamma, there 's a ribbon gone from my hat."

"Grandmamma, my child, I have n't any starched cravat."

For ten minutes there is a constant going and coming around the charming Grandmamma, constant appeals to her. Every one needs her, she keeps the keys to everything, distributes the pretty, finely fluted white linen, the embroidered handkerchiefs, the best gloves, all the treasures which, when produced from bandboxes and cupboards and laid out upon the beds, spread throughout a house the sunshiny cheerfulness of Sunday.

The laboring men, the people who work with their hands, alone know the joy that comes with the end of each week, consecrated by the custom of a nation. For those people, prisoners throughout the week, the crowded lines of the almanac open at equal intervals in luminous spaces, in refreshing whiffs of air. Sunday, the day that seems so long to worldly people, to the Parisians of the boulevard, whose fixed habits it deranges, and so melancholy to exiles without a family, is the day which constitutes to a multitude of people the only recompense, the only goal of six days of toil. Neither rain nor hail makes any difference to them; nothing will prevent them from going out, from closing the door of the deserted workshop or the stuffy little lodging behind them. But when the springtime takes a hand, when a May sun is shining as it is shining this morning and Sunday can array itself in joyous colors, then indeed it is the holiday of holidays.

If you would appreciate it to the full, you must see it in the laboring quarters, in those dismal streets which it illumines, which it makes broader

by closing the shops, housing the great vans, leaving the space free for the romping of children with clean faces and in their best clothes, and games of battledore mingled with circling flocks of swallows under some porch in old Paris. You must see it in the swarming, fever-stricken faubourgs where from early morning you feel it hovering, soothing and grateful, over the silent factories, passing with the clang of bells and the shrill whistle of the locomotives, which give the impression of a mighty hymn of departure and deliverance arising from all the suburbs. Then you appreciate it and love it.

O thou Parisian Sunday, Sunday of the working man and the humble, I have often cursed thee without reason, I have poured out floods of abusive ink upon thy noisy, effervescent joy, the dusty railway stations filled with thy uproar, and the lumbering omnibuses which thou takest by assault, upon thy wine-shop ballads roared forth in spring-carts bedecked with green and pink dresses, thy barrel-organs wheezing under balconies in deserted court-yards; but to-day, renouncing my errors, I exalt thee and bless thee for all the joy and relief thou bringest to courageous, honorable toil, for the laughter of the children who acclaim thee, for the pride of happy mothers dressing their little ones in thy honor, for the dignity which thou dost keep alive in the dwellings of the lowliest, for the gorgeous apparel put aside for thee in the depths of the old crippled wardrobe; above all I bless thee for all the happiness which thou didst

bring in full measure that morning to the great new house on the outskirts of the old faubourg.

The toilets completed, the breakfast hastily swallowed,[1] they are putting on their hats in front of the mirror in the salon. Grandmamma is casting her eye around for the last time, sticking in a pin here, retying a ribbon there, adjusting the paternal cravat; but, while all the little party are pawing the floor impatiently, beckoned out of doors by the beauty of the day, suddenly their gayety is clouded by a ring at the door-bell.

"Suppose we don't go to the door?" the children suggest.

And what relief, what a shout of joy when friend Paul appears!

"Come quick, quick; let us tell you the good news!"

He knew before anybody else that the play was accepted. He had had difficulty enough in making Cardailhac read it, for at the first sight of the "little lines," as he called the verses, he wanted to send the manuscript to the Levantine and her *masseur*, as he did with all the rubbish that was sent to him. But Paul was careful not to speak of his intervention. As for the other great event,

[1] There is in the text at this point a play upon words which it is impossible to render in English. "Les toilettes terminées, le déjeuner fini, pris sur le pouce — et sur le pouce de ces demoiselles vous pensez ce qu'il peut tenir," etc., that is to say: "the breakfast at an end, taken upon the thumb — and you can imagine how much the thumbs of those young ladies would hold." To eat *sur le pouce* (eat upon the thumb) means to eat hastily, without taking time to sit down.

which was not mentioned because of the children, he guessed it without difficulty from the tremulous happiness of Maranne, whose fair hair stood straight on end over his forehead, — because the poet constantly thrust both hands through it, as he always did in his moments of joy, — from the slightly embarrassed demeanor of Élise, and from the triumphant airs of M. Joyeuse, who stood proudly erect in his spotless linen, with all the happiness of his dear ones written on his face.

Grandmamma alone preserved her usual tranquil bearing; but one detected in her, in the zeal with which she waited upon her sister, a more affectionate warmth than usual, a wish to make her attractive. And it was delightful to see that girl of twenty intent upon beautifying another, without envy or regret, with something of the sweet renunciation of a mother celebrating her daughter's young love in memory of her own bygone happiness. Paul saw it, indeed he was the only one who saw it; but, while he gazed in admiration at Aline, he asked himself sadly if there would ever be room in that motherly heart for other than family attachments, for interests outside of the tranquil circle of light in which Grandmamma presided so prettily over the work-table in the evening.

Love, as we know, is a poor blind boy, bereft of speech and hearing as well, and with no other guide than prescience, divination, the nervous faculties of the invalid. Really, it is pitiful to see him wander about, feeling his way, faltering at

every step, tapping with his fingers the projections upon which he depends for guidance, with the distrustful awkwardness of an infirm old man. At the very moment when he was mentally casting a doubt upon Aline's susceptibility, Paul, having informed his friends that he was about to leave Paris for a journey of several days, of several weeks perhaps, did not notice the girl's sudden pallor, did not hear the sorrowful exclamation from her discreet lips:

"You are going away?"

He was going away, he was going to Tunis, very uneasy at the idea of leaving his poor Nabob in the midst of his bloodthirsty pack of pursuers; however, Mora's friendship reassured him somewhat, and, moreover, the journey was absolutely necessary.

"And what about the *Territoriale?*" asked the old book-keeper, always recurring to his fixed idea. "How does that stand? I see that Jansoulet's name is still at the head of the administrative council. Can't you get him out of that Ali Baba's cave? Beware, beware!"

"Ah! I know it, Monsieur Joyeuse. But in order to get out of it with honor, we must have money, much money, must sacrifice two or three millions more; and we haven't them. That is why I am going to Tunis, to try and extort from the bey's rapacity a small portion of the great fortune which he so unjustly withholds. At this moment I have some chance of success, whereas a little later perhaps—"

"Go at once then, my dear boy, and if you return with a bag full of money as I trust you will, attend first of all to the Paganetti gang. Remember that one shareholder less patient than the rest will be enough to blow the whole thing into the air, to demand an inquiry; and you know as well as I what an inquiry would disclose. On reflection," added M. Joyeuse, wrinkling his brow, "I am surprised that Hemerlingue in his hatred of you has not secretly procured a few shares —"

He was interrupted by the concert of maledictions, of imprecations which the name of Hemerlingue always called forth from all those young people, who hated the corpulent banker for the injury he had done their father and for the injury he wished to do the worthy Nabob, who was adored in that household for Paul de Géry's sake.

"Hemerlingue, the heartless creature! Villain! Wicked man!"

But, amid that chorus of outcries, the *Imaginaire* worked out his theory of the stout baron becoming a shareholder in the *Territoriale* in order to drag his enemy before the courts. And we can imagine André Maranne's stupefaction, knowing absolutely nothing of the affair, when he saw M. Joyeuse turn toward him, his face purple and swollen with rage, and point his finger at him with these terrible words:

"The greatest rascal here is yourself, monsieur!"

"O papa, papa! what are you saying?"

"Eh? What's that? — Oh! I beg your pardon,

my dear André. I imagined that I was in the examining magistrate's office, confronting that villain. It 's my infernal brain that is forever rushing off to the devil."

A roar of laughter rang out through all the open windows, mingling with the rumbling of innumerable carriages and the chatter of gayly-dressed crowds on Avenue des Ternes; and the author of *Révolte* took advantage of the diversion to inquire if they did not propose to start soon. It was late — the good places in the Bois would all be taken.

"The Bois de Boulogne, on Sunday!" exclaimed Paul de Géry.

"Oh! our Bois is not the same as yours," replied Aline with a smile. "Come with us, and you will see."

Has it ever happened to you, when you were walking alone and in contemplative mood, to lie flat on your face in the grassy underbrush of a forest, amid the peculiar vegetation, of many and varying species, that grows between the fallen autumn leaves, and to let your eyes stray along the level of the earth before you? Gradually the idea of height vanishes, the interlaced branches of the oaks above your head form an inaccessible sky, and you see a new forest stretching out beneath the other, opening its long avenues pierced by a mysterious green light and lined by slender or tufted shrubs ending in round tops of exotic or wild aspect, stalks of sugar-cane, the graceful rigidity of palms, slender cups holding a drop of

water, girandoles bearing little yellow lights which flicker in the passing breeze. And the miraculous feature of it all is that beneath those slender stalks live miniature plants and myriads of insects whose existence, seen at such close quarters, reveals all its mysteries to you. An ant, staggering like a woodcutter under his burden, drags a piece of bark larger than himself; a beetle crawls along a blade of grass stretched like a bridge from trunk to trunk; while, beneath a tall fern standing by itself in a clearing carpeted with velvety moss, some little blue or red creature waits, its antennæ on the alert, until some other beast, on its way thither by some deserted path, arrives at the rendezvous under the gigantic tree. It is a small forest beneath the large one, too near the ground for the latter to perceive it, too humble, too securely hidden to be reached by its grand orchestra of songs and tempests.

A similar phenomenon takes place in the Bois de Boulogne. Behind those neat, well-watered gravelled paths, where long lines of wheels moving slowly around the lake draw a furrow by constant wear throughout the day, with the precision of a machine, behind that wonderful stage-setting of verdure-covered walls, of captive streams, of flower-girt rocks, the real forest, the wild forest, with its luxuriant underbrush, advances and recedes, forming impenetrable shadows traversed by narrow paths and rippling brooks. That is the forest of the lowly, the forest of the humble, the little forest under the great. And Paul, who knew nothing of

the aristocratic resort save the long avenues, the gleaming lake as seen from the back seat of a carriage or from the top of a break in the dust of a return from Longchamps, was amazed to see the deliciously secluded nook to which his friends escorted him.

It was on the edge of a pond that lay mirror-like beneath the willows, covered with lilies and lentils, with great patches of white here and there, where the sun's rays fell upon the gleaming surface, and streaked with great tendrils of *argyronètes* as with lines drawn by diamond points.

They had seated themselves, to listen to the reading of the play, on the sloping bank, covered with verdure already dense, although made up of slender plants, and the pretty attentive faces, the skirts spread out upon the grass made one think of a more innocent and chaste Decameron in a reposeful atmosphere. To complete the picture of nature at its loveliest, the distant rustic landscape, two windmills could be seen through an opening between the branches, turning in the direction of Suresnes, while, of the dazzling gorgeous vision to be seen at every cross-road in the Bois, naught reached them save a confused endless rumbling, to which they finally became so accustomed that they did not hear it at all. The poet's voice alone, fresh and eloquent, rose in the silence, the lines came quivering forth, repeated in undertones by other deeply-moved lips, and there were murmured words of approval, and thrills of emotion at the tragic passages. Grandmamma, indeed, was seen

to wipe away a great tear. But that was because she had no embroidery in her hand.

The first work! That is what *Révolte* was to André — the first work, always too copious and diffuse, into which the author tosses first of all a whole lifetime of ideas and opinions, pressing for utterance like water against the edge of a dam, and which is often the richest, if not the best, of an author's productions. As for the fate that awaited it, no one could say what it might be; and the uncertainty that hovered about the reading of the drama added to his emotion the emotion of each of his auditors, the white-robed hopes of Mademoiselle Élise, M. Joyeuse's fanciful hallucinations and the more positive desires of Aline, who was already in anticipation installing her sister in the nest, rocked by the winds but envied by the multitude, of an artist's household!

Ah! if one of those pleasure-seekers circling the lake for the hundredth time, overwhelmed by the monotony of his habit, had chanced to put aside the branches, how surprised he would have been at that picture! But would he have suspected all the passion and dreams and poetry and hope that were contained in that little nook of verdure hardly larger than the denticulated shadow of a fern on the moss?

"You were right, I did not know the Bois," said Paul in an undertone to Aline, as she leaned on his arm.

They were following a narrow sheltered path, and as they talked they walked very rapidly, far

in advance of the others. But it was not Père Kontzen's terrace nor his crisp fritters that attracted them. No, the noble verses they had heard had carried them to a great height, and they had not yet descended. They walked straight on toward the ever-receding end of the path, which broadened at its extremity into a luminous glory, a dust of sunbeams, as if all the sunshine of that lovely day awaited them at the edge of the woods. Paul had never felt so happy. The light arm resting on his, the childlike step by which his own was guided, would have made life as sweet and pleasant to him as that walk upon the mossy carpet of a green path. He would have told the young girl as much, in words as simple as his feelings, had he not feared to alarm Aline's confidence, caused doubtless by the feeling which she knew that he entertained for another, and which seemed to forbid any thought of love between them.

Suddenly, directly in front of them, a group of equestrians stood out against the bright background, at first vague and indistinct, then taking shape as a man and woman beautifully mounted and turning into the mysterious path among the shafts of gold, the leafy shadows, the myriad specks of light with which the ground was dotted, which they displaced as they cantered forward, and which ran in fanciful designs from the horses' breasts to the Amazon's veil. They rode slowly, capriciously, and the two young people, who had stepped into the bushes, could see perfectly as

they passed quite near to them, with a creaking of new leather, a jangling of bits tossed proudly and white with foam as after a wild gallop, two superb horses bearing a human couple compelled to ride close together by the narrowing of the path; he supporting with one arm the flexible form moulded into a waist of dark cloth, she, with her hand on her companion's shoulder and her little head, in profile — hidden beneath the tulle of her half-fallen veil — resting tenderly thereon. That amorous entwining, cradled by the impatience of the steeds, restive under the restraint imposed upon their fiery spirits, that kiss, causing the reins to become entangled, that passion riding through the woods in hunting costume, in broad daylight, with such contempt of public opinion, would have sufficed to betray the duke and Felicia, even though the haughty and fascinating appearance of the Amazon, and the high-bred ease of her companion, his pallid cheeks slightly flushed by the exercise and Jenkins' miraculous pearls, had not already led to their recognition.

It was not an extraordinary thing to meet Mora in the Bois on Sunday. He, like his master, loved to show himself to the Parisians, to keep his popularity alive in all public places; and then the duchess never accompanied him on that day, and he could draw rein without restraint at the little châlet of Saint-James, known to all Paris, whose pink turrets peering out among the trees school-boys pointed out to one another with whispered comments. But only a madwoman, a shameless

creature like that Felicia, would advertise herself thus, destroy her reputation forever. The sound of hoofs and of rustling bushes dying away in the distance, bent weeds standing erect, branches thrust aside resuming their places — that was all that remained of the apparition.

"Did you see?" Paul was the first to ask.

She had seen and she had understood, despite her virtuous innocence, for a blush overspread her features, caused by the shame we feel for the sins of those we love.

"Poor Felicia!" she whispered, pitying not only the poor abandoned creature who had passed before them, but him as well whom that fall from grace was certain to strike full in the heart. The truth is that Paul de Géry was in no wise surprised by that meeting, which confirmed some previous suspicions and the instinctive repulsion he had felt for the seductive creature at their dinner-party some days before. But it seemed sweet to him to be pitied by Aline, to feel her sympathy in the increased tenderness of her voice, in the arm that leaned more heavily upon his. Like children who play at being ill for the joy of being petted by their mothers, he allowed the comforter to do her utmost to soothe his disappointment, to talk to him of his brothers, of the Nabob, and of the impending journey to Tunis, a beautiful country, so it was said. "You must write to us often, and write long letters about the interesting things you see and about the place you live in. For we can see those who are far away from us better when

we can form an idea of their surroundings." — Chatting thus, they reached the end of the shady path, at a vast clearing where the tumult of the Bois was in full blast, carriages and equestrians alternating, and the crowd tramping in a fleecy dust which gave it, at that distance, the appearance of a disorderly flock of sheep. Paul slackened his pace, emboldened by that last moment of solitude.

"Do you know what I am thinking?" he said, taking Aline's hand; "that any one would enjoy being unhappy for the sake of being comforted by you. But, precious as your sympathy is to me, I cannot allow you to expend your emotion upon an imaginary grief. No, my heart is not broken, but, on the contrary, more alive, more vigorous than before. And if I should tell you what miracle has preserved it, what talisman —"

He placed before her eyes a little oval frame surrounding a profile without shading, a simple pencil sketch in which she recognized herself, surprised to find that she was so pretty, as if reflected in the magic mirror of Love. Tears came to her eyes, although she knew not why, — an open spring whose pulsing flood caused her chaste heart to beat fast.

"This portrait belongs to me. It was made for me. But now, as I am on the point of going away, I am assailed by a scruple. I prefer not to keep it except from your own hands. So take it, and if you find a worthier friend, one who loves you with a deeper, truer love than mine, I authorize you to give it to him."

She had recovered from her confusion, and replied, looking de Géry in the face with affectionate gravity:

"If I listened to nothing but my heart, I should not hesitate to answer you; for, if you love me as you say you do, I am sure that I love you no less. But I am not free, I am not alone in life, — look!"

She pointed to her father and sisters who were motioning to them in the distance and hurrying to overtake them.

"Even so! And I?" said Paul eagerly. "Have I not the same duties, the same burdens? We are like two widowed heads of families. Will you not love mine as dearly as I love yours?"

"Do you mean it? Is it true? You will let me stay with them? I shall be Aline to you and still be Grandmamma to all our children? Oh! then," said the dear creature, beaming with joy and radiance, "then here is my picture, I give it to you. And, with it, all my heart, and forever."

XVIII.

THE JENKINS PEARLS.

ABOUT a week after his adventure with Moëssard, — a new complication in his sadly muddled affairs, — Jansoulet, on leaving the Chamber one Thursday, ordered his coachman to drive him to the hôtel de Mora. He had not been there since the fracas on Rue Royale, and the idea of appearing before the duke caused something of the same panicky sensation beneath his tough epidermis that a schoolboy feels on being summoned before the master after a scuffle in the class-room. However, it was necessary to submit to the embarrassment of that first interview. It was currently reported in the committee rooms that Le Merquier had completed his report, a masterpiece of logic and ferocity, recommending that Jansoulet be unseated, and that he was certain to carry his point off-hand unless Mora, whose power in the Assembly was so great, should himself issue contrary orders. A serious crisis, as will be seen, and one that caused his cheeks to burn with fever as he studied the expression of his features and his courtier-like smiles in the bevelled mirrors of his

coupé, striving to prepare an adroit entry into the presence, — one of his masterstrokes of amiable impudence which had served him so well with Ahmed and thus far with the French statesman, — the whole accompanied by a rapid beating of the heart and the shivering sensation between the shoulders which precedes decisive steps, even when taken in a carriage with gilded panels.

When he reached the mansion on the river bank, he was greatly surprised to see that the footman on the quay, as on the days of great receptions, ordered the carriages to turn into Rue de Lille in order to leave one gateway free for exit. He said to himself, a little disturbed in mind: "What is going on?" Perhaps a concert given by the duchess, a charity bazaar, or some festivity from which Mora had left him out because of the scandal caused by his last adventure. And his anxiety augmented when, after crossing the court of honor amid the tumult of slamming carriage-doors and a constant, dull rumbling on the gravel, he had ascended the steps and found himself in the vast reception-room filled to overflowing with a great throng who were allowed to pass none of the inner doors, but whose anxious steps centred about the table of the servant in attendance, where all the famous names of aristocratic Paris were being inscribed. It seemed as if a sudden blast of disaster had passed through the house, swept away something of its superb tranquillity and allowed unrest and danger to creep into its well-being.

"What a misfortune!"

"Ah! yes, it is terrible."

"And so sudden!"

The people around him exchanged such phrases as they met. A thought passed swiftly through Jansoulet's mind.

"Is the duke ill?" he asked a servant.

"Ah! monsieur. He is dying. He cannot live through the night."

If the roof of the palace had fallen in upon his head, it would not have crushed him more completely. He saw red butterflies whirling around before his eyes, then staggered and fell upon the velvet-covered bench beside the great cage of monkeys, who, over-excited by all the turmoil, clung in a bunch to the bars, hanging by their tails or by their little long-thumbed hands, and in their frightened inquisitiveness assailed with the most extravagant grimaces of their race the stout bewildered man, who sat staring at the floor and repeating to himself aloud: "I am lost! I am lost!"

The duke was dying. He had been taken suddenly ill on Sunday while returning from the Bois. He had felt an intolerable burning sensation which seemed to outline, as with a red-hot iron, the whole internal structure of his body, alternating with chills and numbness and long periods of drowsiness. Jenkins, being summoned at once, prescribed some sedative remedies. The next day the pains returned, more intense than before, and followed by the same icy torpor, also intensified,

as if life were leaving him by fierce leaps and bounds, uprooted. No one in the household was at all disturbed. "The day after Saint-James," callers whispered to one another in the reception-room, and Jenkins' handsome face retained its serenity. He mentioned the duke's indisposition to but two or three persons in his morning round of visits, and so lightly that no one thought anything of it.

Mora himself, despite his extreme weakness, and although he felt as if his head were absolutely empty, "not an idea behind his forehead," as he expressed it, was very far from suspecting the gravity of his condition. Not until the third day, when, upon waking in the morning, he saw a slender thread of blood that had flowed from his mouth over his beard and reddened his pillow, did that refined dandy shudder, that fastidious creature who held in horror all forms of human misery, especially disease, and who saw it creeping upon him stealthily with its defilement, its weaknesses and with the self-abandonment which is the first concession to death. Monpavon, entering the room in Jenkins' wake, caught the suddenly perturbed expression of the great nobleman brought face to face with the terrible truth, and was at the same time horrified by the ravages made in a few hours on Mora's emaciated face, where all the wrinkles belonging to his age, appearing suddenly, mingled with the wrinkles caused by suffering, with the depression of muscles which indicates serious internal lesions. He took Jenkins aside while the fine gentleman's

servants were supplying him with what he required to make his toilet in bed, a whole outfit of silver and crystal in striking contrast with the yellow pallor of the invalid.

"Look you, Jenkins — the duke is very ill."

"I am afraid so," said the Irishman, in an undertone.

"What 's the matter with him?"

"What he apparently wanted, *parbleu!*" exclaimed the other, in a sort of frenzy. "A man can't be young with impunity at his age. This passion of his will cost him dear."

Some evil thought triumphed in him for the moment, but he instantly imposed silence upon it, and, completely transformed, puffing out his cheeks as if his head were filled with water, he sighed profoundly as he pressed the old nobleman's hands:

"Poor duke! Poor duke! Ah! my friend, I am in despair."

"Have a care, Jenkins," said Monpavon coldly, withdrawing his hands. "You are assuming a terrible responsibility. What! the duke is as ill as you say, ps — ps — ps. See no one? No consultation?"

The Irishman threw up his arms as if to say: "What 's the use?"

The other insisted. It was absolutely essential that Brisset, Jousselin, Bouchereau, all the great men should be called in.

"But you will frighten him to death."

Monpavon inflated his breast, the old foundered charger's only pride.

"My dear fellow, if you had seen Mora and myself in the trenches at Constantine — ps — ps — Never lowered our eyes — Don't know what fear means. Send word to your confrères, I will undertake to prepare him."

The consultation took place that evening behind closed doors, the duke having demanded that it be kept secret through a curious feeling of shame because of his illness, because of the suffering that dethroned him and reduced him to the level of other men. Like those African kings who conceal themselves in the depths of their palaces to die, he would have liked the world to believe that he had been taken away, transfigured, had become a god. Then, too, above all, he dreaded the compassion, the condolence, the emotion with which he knew that his pillow would be surrounded, the tears that would be shed, because he would suspect that they were insincere, and because, if sincere, they would offend him even more by their grimacing ugliness.

He had always detested scenes, exaggerated sentiments, whatever was likely to move him, to disturb the harmonious equilibrium of his life. Everybody about him was aware of it and the orders were to keep at a distance all the cases of distress, all the despairing appeals that were made to Mora from one end of France to the other, as to one of those houses of refuge in the forest in which a light shines at night and at which all those who have lost their way apply for shelter. Not that he was hard to the unfortunate, perhaps indeed

he felt that he was too readily susceptible to pity, which he regarded as an inferior sentiment, a weakness unworthy of the strong, and for the same reason that he denied it to others, dreaded it for himself, lest it impair his courage. So that no one in the palace, save Monpavon and Louis the valet, knew the purpose of the visit of those three persons who were mysteriously ushered into the presence of the Minister of State. Even the duchess herself was in ignorance. Separated from her husband by all the barriers that life in the most exalted political and social circles places between the husband and wife in such exceptional establishments, she supposed that he was slightly indisposed, ill mainly in his imagination, and had so little suspicion of an impending catastrophe that, at the very hour when the physicians were ascending the half-darkened grand staircase, her private apartments at the other end of the palace were brilliantly illuminated for an informal dancing-party, one of those *white balls* which the ingenuity of idle Paris was just beginning to introduce.

That consultation was, like all consultations, grim and solemn. Doctors no longer wear the huge wigs of Molière's day, but they still assume the same portentous gravity of priests of Isis or astrologers, bristling with cabalistic formulæ accompanied by movements of the head which lack only the pointed cap of an earlier age to produce a laughable effect. On this occasion the scene borrowed an imposing aspect from the surroundings. In the vast room, transformed, magnified as

it were, by the master's immobility, those solemn faces approached the bed upon which the light was concentrated, revealing amid the white linen and the purple curtains a shrivelled face, pale from the lips to the eyes, but enveloped with serenity as with a veil, as with a winding-sheet. The consulting physicians talked in low tones, exchanged a furtive glance, an outlandish word or two, remained perfectly impassive without moving an eyebrow. But that mute, unmeaning expression characteristic of the doctor and the magistrate, that solemnity with which science and justice encompass themselves in order to conceal their weakness or their ignorance, had no power to move the duke.

Sitting on his bed, he continued to talk tranquilly, with that slightly exalted expression in which the thought seems to soar upward as if to escape, and Monpavon coolly replied to him, hardening himself against his emotion, taking a last lesson in breeding from his friend, while Louis, in the background, leaned against the door leading to the duchess's apartments, the type of the silent servitor, in whom heedless indifference is a duty.

The agitated, the feverish member of the party was Jenkins.

Overflowing with obsequious respect for "his illustrious confrères," as he unctuously called them, he prowled about their conference and tried to take part in it; but his confrères kept him at a distance, hardly answered him, or answered him haughtily, as Fagon — Louis the Fourteenth's Fagon — might have answered some charlatan who had been

summoned to the royal bedside. Old Bouchereau especially looked askance at the inventor of the Jenkins Pearls. At last, when they had thoroughly examined and questioned their patient, they withdrew for deliberation to a small salon, all in lacquer-work, with gleaming highly-colored walls and ceiling, filled with an assortment of pretty trifles, whose uselessness contrasted strangely with the importance of the discussion.

A solemn moment, the agony of the accused man awaiting the decision of his judges, life, death, reprieve or pardon!

With his long white hand Mora continued to caress his moustache, his favorite gesture, to talk with Monpavon about the club and the green-room at the Variétés, asking for news of the proceedings in the Chamber and what progress had been made in the matter of the Nabob's election — all with perfect coolness and without the slightest affectation. Then, fatigued doubtless, or fearing that his glance, which constantly returned to the portière opposite through which the decree of fate was presently to come forth, should betray the emotion that lurked at the bottom of his heart, he leaned his head back, closed his eyes, and did not open them again until the doctors returned. Still the same cold, ominous faces, veritable faces of judges with the terrible word of human destiny on their lips, the Final word, which the courts pronounce without emotion, but which the doctors, all of whose skill and learning it baffles, evade and seek to convey by circumlocution.

"Well, messieurs, what says the Faculty?" inquired the sick man.

There were a few hypocritical, stammered words of encouragement, vague recommendations; then the three learned men hastily took their leave, eager to be gone, to avoid any responsibility for the impending disaster. Monpavon rushed after them. Jenkins remained by the bedside, overwhelmed by the brutal truths he had heard during the consultation. In vain had he put his hand upon his heart, quoted his famous motto. Bouchereau had not spared him. This was not the first of the Irishman's patients whom he had seen fall suddenly to pieces thus; but he trusted that Mora's death would be a salutary warning to people in society, and that the prefect of police, as the result of this great calamity, would send the "dealer in cantharides," to advertise his aphrodisiacs on the other side of the Channel.

The duke realized that neither Jenkins nor Louis would tell him the real result of the consultation. He did not press them, therefore, but submitted to their assumed confidence, even pretended to share it and to believe all that they told him. But when Monpavon returned, he called him to his bedside, and, undaunted by the falsehood that was visible even under the paint of that wreck, he said:

"Oh! no wry faces, I beg. Between you and me, let us have the truth. What do they say? — I am in a bad way, am I not?"

Monpavon prefaced his reply by a significant pause; then roughly, cynically, for fear of showing emotion at the words:

"Damnation, my poor Auguste!"

The duke received it between the eyes without winking.

"Ah!" he said, simply.

He twisted his moustache mechanically; but his features did not change. And in an instant his resolution was formed.

That the poor wretch who dies in the hospital, without home or kindred, with no other name than the number of his bed, should accept death as a deliverance or submit to it as a last trial, that the old peasant who falls asleep, bent double, worn out and stiff-jointed, in his dark, smoke-begrimed mole-hole, should go thence without regret, that he should relish in anticipation the taste of the cool earth he has turned and re-turned so many times, one can understand. And yet how many of them are attached to existence by their very misery, how many exclaim as they cling to their wretched furniture, to their rags: "I do not want to die," and go with their nails broken and bleeding from that last wrench! But there was nothing of the sort here.

To have everything and to lose everything. What an upheaval!

In the first silence of that awful moment, while he listened to the muffled music of the duchess's ball at the other end of the palace, the things that still bound that man to life — power, honors, wealth, all the magnificence that surrounded him — must have seemed to him to be already far away in an irrevocable past. It required courage of a very

exceptional temper to resist such a blow without the slightest outburst of self-love. No one was present save the friend, the physician, the servant, three intimate acquaintances, who were familiar with all his secrets; the lights being turned low left the bed in shadow, and the dying man could have turned his face to the wall and given vent to his emotion unseen. But no. Not a second of weakness, of fruitless demonstrations. Without breaking a branch of the chestnut trees in the garden, without withering a flower in the great hall of the palace, Death, muffling his footsteps in the heavy carpets, had opened that great man's door and motioned to him: "Come!" And he replied, simply, "I am ready." A fit exit for a man of the world, unforeseen, swift and noiseless.

A man of the world! Mora was nothing else. Passing smoothly through life, arrayed in mask and gloves and breastplate, the breastplate of white satin worn by fencing-masters on days of great exhibitions, keeping his fighting costume ever clean and spotless, sacrificing everything to that irreproachable exterior which served him instead of a coat of mail, he had metamorphosed himself into a statesman, passing from the salon to a vaster stage, and made in truth a statesman of the first order simply by virtue of his qualities as a leader of society, the art of listening and smiling, knowledge of men, scepticism and *sang-froid.* That *sang-froid* did not leave him at the supreme moment.

With his eyes upon the brief, limited time which

still remained to him, for his dark-browed visitor was in haste and he could feel on his face the wind from the door which he had not closed, he thought of nothing but making good use of that time and fulfilling all the obligations of an end like his own, which should leave no devotion unrewarded, should compromise no friend. He made a list of the few persons whom he wished to see and to whom messengers were sent at once; then he asked for his chief clerk, and when Jenkins suggested that he was overtiring himself, "Will you promise me that I shall wake to-morrow morning? I have a spasm of strength at this moment. Let me make the most of it."

Louis asked if he should warn the duchess. The duke, before replying, listened to the strains from the ball that came floating in through the opened windows, prolonged in the darkness by an invisible bow; then he said:

"Let us wait a little. I have something to do first."

He bade them move to his bedside the little lacquer table, intending himself to sort out the letters to be destroyed; but, finding that his strength was failing, he called Monpavon: "Burn everything," he said to him in a feeble voice, and added, when he saw him going toward the fireplace, where a bright fire was burning, notwithstanding the fine weather:

"No — not here. There are too many of them. Some one might come."

Monpavon lifted the light desk and motioned to

the valet to carry a light for him. But Jenkins darted forward:

"Stay, Louis, the duke may need you."

He took possession of the lamp; and they stole cautiously along the long corridor, exploring the reception-rooms, the galleries, where the fireplaces were filled with artificial plants with no trace of ashes, wandering like ghosts in the silence and darkness of the vast dwelling, alive only over yonder at the right where pleasure sang like a bird on a roof that is about to fall.

"There's no fire anywhere. What are we to do with all this stuff?" they asked each other, sorely perplexed. One would have said they were two thieves dragging away a safe which they were unable to open. At last Monpavon, out of patience, walked with an air of resolution to a certain door, the only one they had not yet opened.

"Faith, we 'll do the best we can! As we can't burn them, we 'll drown them. Show me a light, Jenkins."

And they entered.

Where were they? Saint-Simon, describing the downfall of one of these sovereign existences, the utter confusion of ceremonials, of dignities, of grandeurs caused by death, especially by sudden death, Saint-Simon alone could have told you. With his delicate, carefully-kept hands the Marquis de Monpavon pumped. The other passed him torn letters, bundles of letters, soft as satin, many-hued, perfumed, adorned with ciphers, crests, banderoles with mottoes, covered with fine,

close, scrawling, enlaced, persuasive chirography; and all those delicate pages whirled round and round in the eddying stream of water which crumpled and soiled them and washed away the pale ink before allowing them to disappear with a gurgling hiccough at the bottom of the filthy sink.

There were love-letters and love-letters of all sorts, from the note of the adventuress — "I saw you pass at the Bois yesterday, Monsieur le Duc," — to the aristocratic reproaches of the mistress before the last, the wailing of the abandoned, and the page still fresh with recent confidences. Monpavon was familiar with all these mysteries, gave a name to each of them: "That's from Madame Moor" — "Ah! Madame d'Athis." A confused mass of coronets and initials, passing whims and old habits, sullied at that moment by being thrown together promiscuously, all swallowed up in that ghastly place, by lamplight, with a noise as of an intermittent deluge, going to oblivion by a shameful road. Suddenly Jenkins paused in his work of destruction. Two letters on pearl-gray satin paper trembled in his fingers.

"Who's that?" queried Monpavon, at sight of the unfamiliar hand and the Irishman's nervous excitement. "Ah! doctor, if you mean to read everything we shall never finish."

Jenkins, with burning cheeks, his two letters in his hand, was consumed by a fierce longing to carry them away in order to gloat over them at his leisure, to torture himself with delicious pain by reading them, perhaps also to use that correspond-

ence as a weapon against the imprudent creature who had signed it. But the marquis's rigid demeanor frightened him. How could he divert his attention, get rid of him? An opportunity presented itself unsought. A tiny sheet, written in a senile, tremulous hand, had found its way between those same letters, and attracted the attention of the charlatan, who said with an artless expression:

"Oho! here 's something that does n't look like a billet-doux. 'My dear duke, help, I am drowning! The Cour des Comptes has stuck its nose into my affairs again'—"

"What the devil 's that you 're reading?" exclaimed Monpavon abruptly, snatching the letter from his hands. And in an instant, thanks to Mora's negligence in allowing such private letters to lie around, the terrible plight in which he would be left by his protector's death came to his mind. In his grief he had not as yet thought of it. He said to himself that, amid his preparations for leaving the world, the duke might very well forget him; and, leaving Jenkins to finish alone the drowning of Don Juan's casket, he returned hurriedly to the bedroom. As he was about to enter, the sound of voices detained him behind the lowered portière. It was Louis's voice, as whining as that of a pauper under a porch, trying to move the duke to pity for his distress and asking his permission to take a few rolls of gold that were lying in a drawer. Oh! what a hoarse, wearied, hardly audible reply, in which one could feel the effort of the sick man compelled to turn in his bed, to re-

move his eyes from a distant point already clearly distinguished:

"Yes, yes — take them. But for God's sake let me sleep! let me sleep!"

Drawers opened and closed, a hurried, panting breath. Monpavon heard no more, but retraced his steps without entering the room. The servant's ferocious greed had given his pride the alarm. Anything rather than degrade himself to that point.

The slumber for which Mora begged so persistently, the lethargy, to speak more accurately, lasted a whole night and morning, with partial awakenings caused by excruciating pain which yielded each time to soporifics. They did nothing for him except to try to make his last moments comfortable, to help him over that last step which it requires such a painful effort to pass. His eyes had opened during that time, but they were already dim, staring into emptiness at wavering shadows, indistinct forms, like those which a diver sees quivering in the vague depths of the water. On Thursday afternoon, about three o'clock, he recovered consciousness completely, and, recognizing Monpavon, Cardailhac and two or three other close friends, smiled at them and betrayed in a word his sole preoccupation:

"What do people say of this in Paris?"

People said many things, diverse and contradictory; but one thing was certain, that they talked of nothing else, and the report which had been circulated through the city that morning, that

Mora was at death's door, had put the streets, the salons, the cafés, the studios in a ferment, revived political questions in the newspaper offices, in the clubs, and even in porters' lodges and on the omnibuses, wherever open newspapers furnished a pretext for comment on that startling item of news.

This Mora was the most brilliant incarnation of the Empire. The part of a building that we see from afar is not its foundation, be it solid or tottering, not its architectural features, but the slender, gilded arrow, fancifully carved and perforated, added for the gratification of the eye. What people saw of the Empire in France and throughout Europe was Mora. When he fell, the structure was stripped of all its elegance, marred by a long irreparable crack. And how many existences were involved in that sudden fall, how many fortunes shattered by the after effects of the catastrophe! Not one so completely as that of the stout man sitting motionless on the monkeys' bench in the reception-room below.

To the Nabob that man's death meant his own death, his ruin, the end of everything. He was so thoroughly conscious of it that when he was informed, on entering the house, of the Duke's desperate condition, he indulged in no whining or wry faces of any sort, simply the savage ejaculation of human selfishness: "I am lost!" And the words came constantly to his lips, he repeated them instinctively each time that all the horror of his position came over him in sudden flashes, — as in

those dangerous mountain storms, when a sharp flash of lightning illumines the abyss to the very bottom, with the jagged projections of the walls and the clumps of bushes scattered here and there to supply the rents and bruises of the fall.

The rapid keenness of vision that accompanies cataclysms spared him no detail. He saw that he was almost certain to be unseated now that Mora would not be at hand to plead his cause; and the consequences of defeat, bankruptcy, poverty and something worse, for these incalculable fortunes, when they crumble away, always keep a little of a man's honor under the ruins. But what thorns, what brambles, what bruises, what cruel wounds before reaching the end! In a week the Schwalbach notes to be paid, that is to say eight hundred thousand francs, Moëssard's claim for damages — he demanded a hundred thousand francs or would apply to the Chamber for authority to institute criminal process against him — another more dangerous suit begun by the families of two little martyrs of Bethlehem against the founders of the establishment; and, in addition to all the rest, the complications of the *Caisse Territoriale*. A single ray of hope, Paul de Géry's negotiations with the bey, but so vague, so problematical, so far away!

"Ah! I am lost! I am lost!"

In the vast apartment no one noticed his trouble. That crowd of senators, deputies, councillors of state, all the leading men in the government, went and came around him without seeing him, held mysterious conferences and rested their elbows in

anxious importance on the two white marble mantels that faced each other. So many disappointed, betrayed, over-hasty ambitions met in that visit *in extremis*, that selfish anxiety predominated over every other form of preoccupation.

The faces, strangely enough, expressed neither pity nor grief, rather a sort of wrath. All those people seemed to bear the duke a grudge for dying, as if for turning his back upon them. Such remarks as this were heard: "It 's not at all strange after such a life!" And, standing at the long windows, the gentlemen called one another's attention to some dainty coupé drawing up amid the constant stream of carriages going and coming outside, while a gloved hand, its lace sleeve brushing against the door, handed a folded card to the footman who brought her information of the invalid's condition.

From time to time one of the intimates of the palace, one of those whom the dying man had sent for, appeared for a moment in the throng, gave an order, then vanished, leaving the terrified expression of his face reflected upon a score of others. Jenkins showed himself in that way for a moment, cravat untied, waistcoat open, cuffs soiled and rumpled, in all the disarray of the battle he was waging upstairs against a terrible opponent. He was at once surrounded, pressed with questions. Certainly the monkeys flattening their short noses against the bars of the cage, awed by the unusual uproar and very attentive to what was taking place, as if they were making a careful study of human expression, had a magnificent model in the Irish

doctor. His grief was superb, the noble grief of a strong man, which compressed his lips and made his breast heave.

"The death-agony has begun," he said dolefully. "It is only a matter of hours now."

And, as Jansoulet drew near, he said to him in an emphatic tone:

"Ah! my friend, what a man! What courage! He has forgotten nobody. Only a little while ago he spoke to me about you."

"Really?"

"'Poor Nabob!'" he said, "'how is his election coming on?'"

And that was all. He had said nothing more.

Jansoulet hung his head. What had he expected, in heaven's name? Was it not enough that a man like Mora should have thought of him at such a moment? He returned to his seat on the bench, relapsed into his former state of prostration, galvanized by a moment of wild hope, sat there heedless of the fact that the vast apartment was becoming almost entirely deserted, and did not notice that he was the last and only visitor remaining until he heard the servants talking aloud in the fading light.

"I have had enough — my service here is done."

"For my part I shall stay with the duchess."

And those plans, those decisions anticipating the master's death by some hours, doomed the noble duke even more surely than the Faculty had done.

The Nabob realized then that it was time for him to withdraw, but he determined first to write his

name on the register. He went to the table and leaned far over in order to see clearly. The page was full. A blank space was pointed out to him, below a name written in small, threadlike characters, as if by fingers too stout for the pen, and, when he had signed, Hemerlingue's name overshadowed his, crushed it, entangled it in an insidious flourish. Superstitious like the true Latin that he was, he was impressed by the omen and carried the terror of it away with him.

Where should he dine? At the club? On Place Vendôme? And hear nothing talked of but this death which engrossed his thoughts! He preferred to trust to chance, to go straight ahead like all those who are beset by a persistent idea which they try to escape by walking. It was a warm, balmy evening. He walked on and on along the quays till he reached the tree-lined paths of the Cours-la-Reine, then returned to the combination of freshly-watered streets and odor of fine dust which characterizes fine evenings in Paris. At that uncertain hour everything was deserted. Here and there girandoles were lighted for concerts, gas-jets flared among the foliage. The rattle of plates and glasses from a restaurant suggested to him the idea of entering.

The robust creature was hungry notwithstanding his anxiety. His dinner was served under a verandah with walls of glass, lined with foliage and facing the great porch of the Palais de l'Industrie, where the duke, in presence of a thousand persons, had saluted him as deputy. The refined and aris-

tocratic face appeared to his mind's eye in the dark archway, while at the same time he saw him lying yonder on his white pillow; and, suddenly, as he stared at the bill of fare the waiter handed him, he noticed with a sort of stupefaction that it was dated May 20th. So not a month had passed since the opening of the Salon. It seemed to him as if it were ten years since that day. Gradually, however, the excellent repast warmed and comforted his heart. In the passage he heard some of the waiters talking:

"Is there any news of Mora? It seems he 's very sick."

"Nonsense! He 'll pull through. Such fellows as he are the only ones who have any luck."

Hope is anchored so firmly to the human entrails that, despite what Jansoulet had seen and heard, those few words, assisted by two bottles of burgundy and divers *petits verres* sufficed to restore his courage. After all, people had been known to recover when they were as far gone. Doctors often exaggerate the danger in order to gain more credit for averting it. "Suppose I go and see?" He returned to the hôtel de Mora, full of illusions, appealing to the luck that had stood him in good stead so many times in his life. And in truth there was something in the appearance of the princely abode to justify his hope. It wore the tranquil, reassuring aspect of ordinary evenings, from the avenue with lights burning at equal intervals, to the main doorway, at which an enormous carriage of antique shape was waiting.

In the reception-room, where there were no signs of excitement, two great lamps were burning. A footman was asleep in a corner, the usher was reading in front of the fire. He glanced at the new arrival over his spectacles, but said nothing to him, and Jansoulet dared ask no questions. Piles of newspapers lay on the table in wrappers addressed to the duke, apparently tossed there as useless. The Nabob opened one and tried to read; but a rapid, gliding step, a sing-song murmuring made him raise his eyes, and he saw a white-haired, stooping old man, decked out with finery like an altar, who was praying as he walked with long priest-like strides, his red cassock spread out like a train over the carpet. It was the Archbishop of Paris, accompanied by two assistants. The vision with its murmur as of an icy wind passed swiftly before Jansoulet, was engulfed by the great chariot and disappeared, carrying away his last hope.

"A question of propriety, my dear fellow," said Monpavon, suddenly appearing at his side. "Mora is an epicurean, brought up in the ideas of What's-his-name — Thingamy — you know whom I mean! Eighteenth century. But it's very bad for the masses, if a man in his position — ps — ps — ps — Ah! he was head and shoulders above all of us — ps — ps — irreproachable breeding."

"So, it's all over, is it?" said Jansoulet desperately. "There's no more hope?"

Monpavon motioned to him to listen. A carriage rumbled heavily along the avenue on the

quay. The bell rang several times in quick succession. The marquis counted aloud: "One, two, three, four —" At the fifth he rose.

"There's no hope now. There comes the other," he said, alluding to the Parisian superstition to the effect that a visit from the sovereign was always fatal to the dying. The servants hurried from all directions, threw the folding-doors wide open and formed a lane, while the usher, his hat *en bataille*, announced with a resounding blow of his pike upon the floor the passage of two august personages, of whom Jansoulet caught only a confused glimpse behind the servants, but whom he saw through a long vista of open doors ascending the grand staircase, preceded by a valet carrying a candelabrum. The woman was erect and haughty, enveloped in her black Spanish mantilla; the man clung to the stair-rail, walked more slowly and as if fatigued, the collar of his light top-coat standing up from a back slightly bent, which was shaken by convulsive sobs.

"Let us be off, Nabob. Nothing more to be done here," said the old beau, taking Jansoulet by the arm and leading him out. He stopped on the threshold, raised his hand, and waved a little salute with the tips of his gloves toward him who lay dying above. "*Bojou*, dea' boy." The tone and gesture were worldly, irreproachable; but the voice trembled a little.

The club on Rue Royale, renowned for its card-playing, had rarely seen so terrible a game as it

saw that night. It began at eleven o'clock and was still in progress at five in the morning. Enormous sums lay on the green cloth, changed hands and direction, heaped up, scattered, reunited; fortunes were swallowed up in that colossal game, and at its close the Nabob, who had started it to forget his fears in the caprices of luck, after extraordinary alternations, somersaults of fortune calculated to make a neophyte's hair turn white, withdrew with winnings of five hundred thousand francs. They said five millions on the boulevard the next day, and every one cried shame, especially the *Messager*, which gave up three-quarters of its space to an article against certain adventurers who are tolerated in clubs, and who cause the ruin of the most respectable families.

Alas! Jansoulet's winnings hardly represented the amount of the first Schwalbach notes.

During that insane game, although Mora was its involuntary cause, and, as it were, its soul, his name was not once mentioned. Neither Cardailhac nor Jenkins appeared. Monpavon had taken to his bed, more affected than he chose to have people think. They were without news from the sick-room.

"Is he dead?" Jansoulet wondered as he left the club, and he was conscious of an impulse to go and see before returning home. It was no longer hope that impelled him, but that unhealthy, nervous sort of curiosity which attracts the poor, ruined, shelterless victims of a conflagration to the débris of their home.

Although it was still very early, the pink flush of dawn still lingering in the air, the whole mansion was open as if for a solemn departure. The lamps were still smoking on the mantels, the air was filled with dust. The Nabob walked on through inexplicable solitude as far as the first floor, where he at last heard a familiar voice, Cardailhac's, dictating names, and the scratching of pens on paper. The skilful organizer of the fêtes for the bey was arranging with the same zeal the funeral ceremonial of the Duc de Mora. Such activity! His Excellency had died during the evening; in the morning ten thousand letters were already printed, and everybody in the house who knew how to hold a pen was busy with the addresses. Without passing through those extemporized offices, Jansoulet made his way to the reception-room, usually so thronged, to-day all the chairs empty. In the centre of the room, on a table, lay Monsieur le Duc's hat and gloves and cane, always ready in the event of his going out unexpectedly, to save him the trouble of an order. The articles that we wear retain something of ourselves. The curve of the hat-rim recalled the curl of the moustaches, the light gloves were ready to grasp the flexible, strong Chinese bamboo, everything seemed to quiver and live, as if the duke were about to appear, to put out his hand as he talked, take them up and go out.

Oh! no, Monsieur le Duc was not going out. Jansoulet had only to walk to the bedroom door, which stood ajar, to see lying on the bed, three steps above the floor — the same platform even

after death — a rigid, haughty form, a motionless, aged profile, transformed by the gray beard that had grown in a night; kneeling against the sloping pillow, her face buried in the white sheets, was a woman whose fair hair fell neglected about her shoulders, ready to fall under the shears of eternal widowhood; a priest, too, and a nun stood absorbed in meditation in that atmosphere of the death vigil, wherein the weariness of sleepless nights is blended with the mumbling of prayers and whispering in the shadow.

That room, in which so many ambitions had felt their wings expand, in which so many hopes and disappointments had had their day, was given over to the tranquillity of death. Not a sound, not a sigh. But, early as it was, over in the direction of Pont de la Concorde, a shrill, piercing little clarinet soared above the rumbling of the first carriages; but its vigorous mockery was wasted thenceforth upon the man who lay sleeping there, revealing to the terrified Nabob the image of his own destiny, cold, discolored, ready for the grave.

Others than Jansoulet saw that death-chamber under even more dismal circumstances. The windows thrown wide open. The night air from the garden entering freely in a brisk current. A form upon trestles; that form, the body just embalmed. The head hollowed out, filled with a sponge, the brain in a bucket. The weight of that statesman's brain was really extraordinary. It weighed — it weighed — The newspapers of the day gave the figures. But who remembers them to-day?

XIX.

THE OBSEQUIES.

"DON'T weep, my fairy; you take away all my courage. Come, you will be much happier when you no longer have your horrible demon. You are going back to Fontainebleau to tend your hens. Brahim's ten thousand francs will be enough to give you a start. And after that have no fear; when I am once there, I'll send you money. As this bey wants some of my sculpture, I shall make him pay well for it, be sure of that. I shall return rich, rich. Who knows? Perhaps a sultana?"

"Yes, you will be a sultana, — but I shall be dead, and I shall never see you again."

And honest Crenmitz in her despair huddled in a corner of the cab, so that her companion might not see her weep.

Felicia was leaving Paris. She was trying to escape the horrible melancholy, the ominous heart-sickness in which Mora's death had plunged her. What a terrible blow for the haughty girl! Ennui, spite had driven her into that man's arms; pride, modesty, she had given all to him, and now he had carried it all away, leaving her withered for

life, a widow without tears, without mourning, without dignity. Two or three visits to Saint-James, a few evenings in the back of a box at some small theatre, behind the grating where forbidden, shamefaced pleasure conceals itself, — those were the only memories bequeathed to her by that liaison of two weeks, that loveless sin, wherein not even her pride had succeeded in satisfying itself by the notoriety of a scandal in high life. The fruitless, ineffaceable stain, the senseless fall into the gutter of a woman who cannot walk, and upon whom the ironical pity of the passers-by weighs heavily when she tries to rise.

For a moment she contemplated suicide, but was deterred by the thought that it might be attributed to despairing love. She saw in anticipation the sentimental emotion of the salons, the absurd figure that her supposed passion would cut amid the duke's innumerable conquests, and upon her grave, dug so near the other, the Parma violets, stripped of their petals by the dandified Moëssards of journalism. There remained the resource of travel, one of those journeys to countries so distant that they expatriate even the thoughts. Unluckily, she lacked money. Thereupon she remembered that, on the day following her success at the Salon, old Brahim Bey had come to see her, to make magnificent proposals to her in his master's name for divers great works to be executed at Tunis. She had said no at the moment, refusing to be tempted by Oriental prices, by a munificent hospitality, by the promise of the finest

courtyard on the Bardo for a studio, surrounded by arches carved like exquisite lace. But now she was willing to accept. She had but to make a sign, the bargain was concluded at once, and after an exchange of despatches, a hasty packing-up, and closing the house, she started for the railway-station as if she were going away for a week, surprised herself by her prompt decision, pleased in all the adventurous and artistic portions of her nature by the prospect of a new life in a strange land.

The bey's pleasure yacht was to await her at Genoa; and, closing her eyes in the cab, she saw in anticipation the white stones of an Italian harbor enclosing an iridescent sea, where the sunlight had a gleam of the Orient, where everything sang joyously, even to the swelling sails upon the deep. It so happened that on that day Paris was muddy and murky, drowned by one of those continuous downpours of rain which seem to have been made for it alone, to have ascended in clouds from its river, its steam, its monster breath, only to descend again in streams from its roofs, its gutters, the innumerable windows of its attics. Felicia was in haste to escape from that depressing Paris, and her feverish impatience vented itself upon the driver for not driving faster, upon the horses, — two genuine broken-down cab-horses, — and upon an inexplicable multitude of carriages and omnibuses jammed together at the approaches to Pont de la Concorde.

"Go on, driver, go on."

"I can't, Madame, — it 's the funeral."

She put her head out of the window and instantly withdrew it, in dismay. A double line of soldiers marching with guns reversed, a wilderness of helmets, of heads uncovered while an interminable procession passed. It was Mora's funeral procession.

"Don't stay here. Drive around some other way," she cried to the driver.

The vehicle turned painfully, tearing itself away with regret from that superb spectacle for which Paris had been waiting four days, rolled back up the avenue, into Rue Montaigne, and down Boulevard Malesherbes, at an unwilling, crawling trot, to the Madeleine. There the crowd was greater, more compact. In the heavy mist, the brightly lighted windows of the church, the muffled strains of the funeral chants behind the black hangings, which were in such profusion that they concealed even the shape of the Greek temple, filled the whole square with reminders of the service then in progress, while the greater part of the huge procession still crowded Rue Royale as far as the bridges, — a long black line connecting the defunct statesman with the iron fence of the Corps Législatif through which he had so often passed. Beyond the Madeleine the roadway of the boulevard was entirely empty, kept clear by two lines of soldiers, who forced the spectators back to the sidewalks, black with people; all the stores closed, and the balconies, despite the rain, overflowing with bodies leaning far forward in the direction of

the church, as if to watch the passage of a herd of fat cattle, or the return of victorious troops. Paris, greedy of spectacles, makes a spectacle of everything indifferently, of civil war or of the burial of a statesman.

Once more the cab must retrace its steps, make another détour, and we can fancy the ill-humor of the driver and his beasts, Parisians all three at heart, and furious at being deprived of such a fine show. Thereupon, through the silent deserted streets, all the life of Paris having betaken itself to the great artery of the boulevard, began a capricious, aimless journey, the senseless loitering of a cab hired by the hour, reaching the extreme limits of Faubourg Saint-Martin, Faubourg Saint-Denis, returning toward the centre, and always finding at the end of every circuit, every stratagem, the same obstacle lying in wait, the same crowd, some off-shoot of the black procession seen vaguely at the end of a street, defiling slowly in the rain to the sound of muffled drums, a dull heavy sound like that made by earth falling bit by bit into a hole.

What torture for Felicia! It was her sin, her remorse passing through the streets of Paris in all that solemn pomp, that funereal magnificence, that public mourning reflected even in the clouds; and the proud girl rebelled against the affront that circumstances put upon her, fled from it to the depths of the carriage, where she remained with closed eyes, overwhelmed, while old Crenmitz, believing that it was her grief which so affected

her nerves, strove to comfort her, wept herself over their separation, and withdrawing into the other corner, left the cab-window in full possesion of the great Algerian *slougui*, his delicate nostrils sniffing the air and his forepaws resting despotically on the sill with heraldic rigidity.

At last, after a thousand interminable détours, the cab suddenly stopped, moved slowly forward again amid shouts and insults, was then pushed this way and that, lifted from the ground, its equilibrium threatened by the trunks on its roof, and finally halted for good and all, as if anchored.

"*Bon Dieu!* What a crowd!" murmured La Crenmitz in terror.

Felicia emerged from her torpor.

"Where in heaven's name are we?"

Beneath a colorless, smoky sky, with a fine network of rain drawn like gauze over the reality of things, lay a great square, filled with a human ocean flowing in from all the adjoining streets, immobilized around a lofty column which towered above that sea of heads like the gigantic mast of a sinking ship. Cavalry in troops, with drawn sabres, artillery in batteries lined the sides of an open pathway, a complete warlike host awaiting him who was soon to pass,—perhaps to try to rescue him, to carry him off by force from the redoubtable foe in whose power he was. Alas! cavalry charges, cannonades were of no avail. The prisoner was firmly bound, protected by a threefold wall of solid wood, of metal and of vel-

vet, inaccessible to shot and shell, and not at the hands of those soldiers could he hope for deliverance.

"Drive on. I do not wish to remain here," said Felicia frantically, pulling the driver's dripping cape, seized with a mad fear at the thought of the nightmare that pursued her, of what she could hear approaching with a ghastly rolling of drums, still distant but drawing nearer momentarily. But, at the first movement of the wheels, the shouts and hooting began anew. Thinking that they would allow him to cross the square, the driver had with great difficulty forced his way to the front rank of the crowd, which had closed in behind him and refused to allow him to turn back. It was impossible to advance or retreat. She must remain there, endure those alcoholic breaths, those inquisitive glances, kindled in anticipation of an exceptionally fine spectacle, and eyeing with interest the fair traveller who was decamping "with such a pile o' trunks as that!" and a cur of that size to protect her. La Crenmitz was horribly frightened; Felicia, for her part, had but one thought, that he was about to pass, that she would be in the front rank to see him.

Suddenly there was a loud shout: "Here he comes!" then a great silence fell upon the square, which had shaken off the burden of three weary hours of waiting.

He was coming!

Felicia's first impulse was to lower the curtain on her side, the side on which the procession was

to pass. But, when she heard the drums close at hand, seized with a nervous frenzy at her inability to escape that obsession, or, it may be, infected by the unhealthy curiosity that encompassed her, she raised the curtain with a jerk, and her pale, ardent little face appeared, resting on both hands, at the window.

"Very good! you will have it so; I am looking at you."

It was the most magnificent funeral one can imagine, the last honors paid in all their vain pomp, as sonorous and as hollow as the rhythmic accompaniment upon asses' skins draped in crape. First, the white surplices of the clergy indistinctly seen amid the black trappings of the first five carriages; then, drawn by six black horses, veritable horses of Erebus, as black, as slow, as sluggish as its flood, came the funeral car, all bedecked with plumes and fringe, embroidered with silver, with heavy tears, with heraldic coronets surmounting gigantic M's, a prophetic initial which seemed to be that of Death (*Mort*) itself, of the Duchess Death decorated with eight *fleurons*. Such a mass of canopies and heavy draperies concealed the ignoble framework of the hearse that it shivered and swayed from top to bottom at every step, as if oppressed by the majesty of its dead. On the casket lay the sword, the coat, the embroidered hat, garments of state which had never been used, resplendent with gold and pearl in the dark chapel formed by the hangings, amid the beautiful display of fresh flowers which told that the season

was spring despite the sulkiness of the sky. Ten paces behind came the people of the duke's household; and then, in solitary majesty, an official in a cloak carrying the decorations, a veritable showcase of all the orders in the known world, crosses, ribbons of all hues, which more than covered the black velvet cushion fringed with silver.

The master of ceremonies came next, at the head of the committee of the Corps Législatif, a dozen or more deputies chosen by lot, in their midst the tall figure of the Nabob, dressed for the first time in his official costume, as if satirical fortune had chosen to give the representative on trial a foretaste of all the joys of parliamentary life. The friends of the deceased, who came next in line, formed a very limited contingent, exceedingly well chosen to lay bare the superficiality and emptiness of the existence of that great personage, reduced to the companionship of a theatrical manager thrice insolvent, a picture-dealer enriched by usury, a nobleman of unsavory reputation and a few high-livers and boulevard idlers unknown to fame. Thus far everybody was on foot and bareheaded; in the parliamentary committee a few black silk skull caps had been timidly donned as they approached the populous quarters. After the friends came the carriages.

At the obsequies of a great warrior, it is customary to include in the funeral procession the hero's favorite horse, his battle-horse, compelled to adapt to the snail-like pace of the cortège the prancing gait which survives the smell of gun-

powder and the waving of standards. On this occasion Mora's great coupé, the "eight-spring" affair which carried him to social or political gatherings, occupied the place of that companion in victory, its panels draped in black, its lanterns enveloped in long, light streamers of crêpe, which floated to the ground with an indescribable undulatory feminine grace. That was a new idea for funerals, those veiled lanterns, the supreme manifestation of *chic* in mourning; and it was most fitting for that dandy to give one last lesson in style to the Parisians who flocked to his funeral as to a Longchamps of death.

Three more masters of ceremonies, then came the impassive official display, always the same for marriages, deaths, baptisms, openings of Parliament, receptions by the sovereign, — the interminable procession of state carriages, with gleaming panels, great mirrors, gaudy, gold-bespangled liveries, which passed amid the dazzled throngs, reminding them of fairy tales, the equipages of Cinderella, and arousing the same *Ohs!* of admiration that ascend and burst with the bombs at displays of fireworks. And in the crowd there was always an obliging police officer, or an erudite petty bourgeois with nothing to do, on the watch for public ceremonials, to name aloud all the people in the carriages as they passed with their proper escorts of dragoons, cuirassiers or *gardes de Paris.*

First the representatives of the Emperor, the Empress, all the imperial family; then, in hierarchical order, scientifically worked out, the slight-

est departure from which might have caused a serious conflict between the various bodies of the government, the members of the Privy Council, the marshals, the admirals, the grand chancellor of the Legion of Honor, the Senate, the Corps Législatif, the Council of State, the whole of the judicial and educational departments, whose costumes, furred robes and wigs carried you back to the days of old Paris; they seemed pompous, superannuated, out of place in the sceptical era of the blouse and the black coat.

Felicia, to avoid thought, fixed her eyes persistently on that monotonous procession, of exasperating length, and gradually a sort of torpor stole over her, as if on a rainy day she were turning the leaves of an album with colored plates lying on the table of a dreary salon, a history of state costumes from the earliest times to our own day. All those people, seen in profile, sitting erect and motionless behind the wide glass panels, bore a close resemblance to the faces of people in the colored fashion-plates displayed as near as possible to the sidewalk, so that we may lose nothing of their gold embroidery, their palm-leaves, their gold lace and braid; manikins intended to gratify the curiosity of the vulgar and exposing themselves with an air of heedless indifference.

Indifference! That was the most marked characteristic of that funeral. You felt it everywhere, on the faces and in the hearts of the mourners, not only among all those functionaries, most of whom

had known the duke by sight only, but in the ranks of those on foot between his hearse and his coupé, his closest friends and those who were in daily attendance upon him. Indifferent, yes, cheerful, was the corpulent minister, vice-president of the Council, who grasped the cords of the pall firmly in his powerful hand, accustomed to pound the desk of the tribune, and seemed to be drawing it forward, in greater haste than the horses and the hearse to consign to his six feet of earth his enemy of twenty years' standing, his constant rival, the obstacle to all his ambitions. The other three dignitaries did not press forward with so much of the vigor of a led horse, but the long streamers were held listlessly in their wearied or distraught hands, significantly nerveless. Indifferent the priests by profession. Indifferent the servants, whom he never called anything else than "What 's-your-name," [1] and whom he treated like things. Indifferent, too, was M. Louis, whose last day of servitude it was — an enfranchised slave rich enough to pay his ransom. Even among his intimates that freezing coldness had made its way. And yet some of them were much attached to him. But Cardailhac was too much occupied in superintending the order and progress of the ceremonial to give way to the slightest emotion, which was quite foreign to his nature moreover. Old Monpavon, although he was struck to the heart, would have considered the slightest crease in his linen breast-plate, the slightest bending of his tall figure,

[1] *Chose* — literally *thing*.

as lamentably bad form, altogether unworthy his illustrious friend. His eyes remained dry, as sparkling as ever, for the Funeral Pageant furnishes the tears for state mourning, embroidered in silver on black cloth. Some one was weeping, however, among the members of the committee, but that some one was shedding ingenuous tears on his own account. Poor Nabob, melted by the music and the display, it seemed to him that he was burying all his fortune, all his ambition for dignity and renown. And even that was one variety of indifference.

In the public the gratification of a gorgeous spectacle, the joy of making a Sunday of a week-day, dominated every other feeling. As the procession passed along the boulevards, the spectators on the balconies almost applauded; here, in the populous quarters, irreverence manifested itself even more frankly. Coarse chaff, vulgar comments on the dead man and his doings, with which all Paris was familiar, laughter called forth by the broad-brimmed hats of the rabbis and the solemn "mugs" of the council of wise men, filled the air between two drum-beats. With feet in the water, dressed in blouses and cotton caps, the head uncovered from habit, poverty, forced labor, idleness and strikes watched with a sneer the passing of that dweller in another sphere, that brilliant duke now shorn of all his honors, who never in his life perhaps had visited that extremity of the city. But here he is! To reach the spot to which everybody goes, one must follow the road

that everybody follows: Faubourg Saint-Antoine, Rue de la Roquette, to that mammoth toll-gate open so wide into the infinite. And *dame!* it is pleasant to see that noblemen like Mora, dukes and ministers, all take the same road to the same destination. That equality in death consoles one for many unjust things in life. To-morrow the bread will seem not so dear, the wine better, the tools less heavy, when one can say to oneself on rising: "Well, that old Mora had to come to it like everybody else."

The procession dragged along, even more tiresome than lugubrious. Now it was the choral societies, deputations from the Army and Navy, officers of all arms of the service, herded together in front of a long line of empty carriages, mourning carriages, gentlemen's carriages, parading in compliance with etiquette; then came the troops in their turn, and Rue de la Roquette, that long street running through the filthy faubourg, already swarming with people as far as the eye could see, swallowed up a whole army, infantry, dragoons, lancers, carabineers, heavy guns with muzzles in the air, all ready to bark, shaking pavements and window-panes, but unable to drown the rolling of the drums, a sinister, barbarous sound, which transported Felicia's imagination to the obsequies of African monarchs, where thousands of immolated victims attend the soul of a prince so that it may not enter the kingdom of spirits alone, and made her think that perhaps that ostentatious, interminable procession was about to de-

scend and disappear in a supernatural grave vast enough to hold it all.

"Now, and in the hour of our death. Amen!" murmured La Crenmitz, while the cab rattled across the empty square, where Liberty, in solid gold, seemed to be taking a magic flight in space; and the old dancer's prayer was perhaps the only sincere note of true emotion uttered throughout the vast space covered by the funeral.

All the discourses are at an end, three long discourses as cold as the cavern into which the dead man has descended, three official harangues which have afforded the orators an opportunity to proclaim in very loud tones their devotion to the interests of the dynasty. Fifteen times the cannon have awakened the numerous echoes of the cemetery, shaken the wreaths of jet and immortelles, the light *ex-votos* hanging at the corners of burial lots, and while a reddish cloud floats upward and revolves amid the odor of powder across the city of the dead, mingling gradually with the smoke from the factories of the plebeian quarter, the countless multitude also disperses, scattering through the sloping streets, the long stairways gleaming white among the verdure, with a confused murmur as of waves beating against the rocks. Purple robes, black robes, blue and green coats, gold ornaments, slender swords which their wearers adjust while marching, return hastily to the carriages. Dignified salutations, meaning smiles are exchanged, while the mourning equi-

pages rumble along the paths at a gallop, displaying lines of black-coated drivers, with rounded backs, hats *en bataille*, capes floating in the wind caused by their swift pace.

The general feeling is one of relief at the close of a long and fatiguing exhibition, a legitimate eagerness to lay aside the administrative harness, the ceremonious costumes, to loosen the belts, the high collars and the stocks, to relax the features which, no less than the bodies, have been wearing fetters.

Short and stout, dragging his bloated legs with difficulty, Hemerlingue hurried toward the exit, declining the offers that were made him of a seat in various carriages, knowing well that only his own was adapted to the weight of his dropsical body.

"Baron, baron, this way. There's a seat for you."

"No, thanks. I am walking the numbness out of my legs."

And, in order to avoid these proposals, which at length annoyed him, he took a cross-path that was almost deserted, too deserted in fact, for he had hardly entered it when he regretted having done so. Ever since he had entered the cemetery, he had had but one absorbing thought, the fear of coming face to face with Jansoulet, whose violent temper he knew well, and who might forget the majesty of the spot and repeat the scandalous scene of Rue Royale in Père-Lachaise. Two or three times during the ceremony he had seen his former

partner's great head emerge from the mass of colorless types of which the attendant throng was largely composed, and move toward him, evidently seeking him, actuated by a desire for a meeting. In the main avenue yonder there would be people at hand in case of accident, while here — *Brr!* It was that anxiety which caused him to force his short steps, his panting breath; but in vain. As he turned in his fear of being followed, the Nabob's tall form and broad shoulders appeared at the entrance of the path. It was impossible for the bulky creature to walk in the narrow space between the tombs, which were packed so closely that there was hardly room to kneel. The rich, rain-soaked earth slipped and gave way under his feet. He adopted the plan of walking on with an indifferent air, hoping that the other would not recognize him. But a hoarse, powerful voice behind him called:

"Lazare!"

The capitalist's name was Lazare. He made no reply but tried to overtake a group of officers who were walking a long way in front of him.

"Lazare! O Lazare!"

Just as in the old days on the quay at Marseille. He was tempted to halt, under the influence of an old habit, but the thought of his infamous conduct, of all the injury he had inflicted on the Nabob and was still attempting to inflict on him, suddenly came to his mind with a horrible fear, amounting to frenzy, when a hand of iron brought him abruptly to a standstill. The sweat of cowardice drenched

his limp and nerveless limbs, his face turned still yellower, his eyes winked in anticipation of the terrible blow he expected to receive, while his great arms were raised instinctively to ward it off.

"Oh! don't be afraid. I have no evil designs on you," said Jansoulet sadly. "I come simply to ask you to cease your designs on me."

He paused to take breath. The banker, stupefied and dismayed, opened his round owl's eyes to their fullest extent in face of that suffocating emotion.

"Listen, Lazare, you are the stronger in this war we have been carrying on so long. I am on the ground at your feet. My shoulders have touched. Now be generous, spare your old chum. Have mercy on me, I say, have mercy on me."

That Southerner, subdued and softened by the pomp of the funeral ceremony, trembled in every limb. Hemerlingue, facing him, was hardly more courageous. The dismal music, the open tomb, the orations, the cannonading, and the lofty philosophy of inevitable death, all had combined to move the stout baron to the depths of his being. His former comrade's voice completed the awakening of such human qualities as still remained in that bundle of gelatine.

His old chum! It was the first time in ten years, since their falling out, that he had seen him at such close quarters. How many things those swarthy features, those powerful shoulders ill-

"'Don't be afraid. I have no evil designs on you.'"

Copyright 1918 by Doubs, Boston & Co.

Goyard & Co. Paris

suited to an embroidered coat, recalled to his mind! The thin woollen blanket, full of holes, in which they both rolled themselves up to sleep on the deck of the *Sinai*, the rations fraternally shared, the long walks through the scorched country about Marseille, where they stole great onions and ate them on the bank of a ditch, the dreams, the projects, the sous put into the common purse, and, when fortune began to smile on them, the antics they played together, the dainty little suppers at which they told each other everything, with their elbows on the table.

How can two people ever fall out when they know each other so well, when they have lived like twins clinging to a thin, strong nurse, poverty, sharing her soured milk and her rough caresses! Such thoughts, long to analyze, passed through Hemerlingue's mind like a flash of lightning. Almost instinctively he let his heavy hand fall into the hand the Nabob held out to him. Something of the animal nature stirred in them both, stronger than their antipathy, and those two men, who had been trying for ten years to ruin and dishonor each other, began to talk together heart to heart.

Generally, when friends meet after a long separation, the first effusive greetings at an end, they remain silent as if they had nothing to tell each other, whereas it is the very abundance of things, their precipitate struggle for utterance that prevents their coming forth. The two former partners had reached that stage; but Jansoulet held the banker's

arm very tight, fearing that he might escape him, might resist the kindly impulses that he had aroused in him.

"You are in no hurry, are you? We might walk a moment or two if you choose. It has stopped raining, it will do us good — we shall be twenty years younger."

"Yes, it 's a pleasant thing," said Hemerlingue; "but I can't walk long, my legs are heavy."

"True, your poor legs. See, there 's a bench yonder. Let 's go and sit down. Lean on me, old fellow."

And the Nabob, with brotherly solicitude, led him to one of the benches placed at intervals against the tombs, for the convenience of those inconsolable mourners who make the cemetery their usual resort. He arranged him comfortably, encompassed him with a protecting glance, sympathized with him in his infirmity, and, the conversation following a course very natural in such a place, they talked of their health, of the approach of old age. One was dropsical, the other subject to rushes of blood to the head. Both were taking the Jenkins Pearls, — a dangerous remedy, witness Mora's sudden taking off.

"Poor duke!" said Jansoulet.

"A great loss to the country," rejoined the banker, in a grief-stricken tone.

Whereupon the Nabob ingenuously exclaimed:

"To me, above all others to me, for if he had lived — Ah! you have all the luck, you have all the luck! And then, you know, you are so strong,

so very strong," he added, fearing that he had wounded him.

The baron looked at him and winked, so drolly that his little black lashes disappeared in his yellow flesh.

"No," he said, "I 'm not the strong one. It 's Marie."

"Marie?"

"Yes, the baroness. At the time of her baptism she dropped her old name, Yumina, for Marie. She 's a real woman. She knows more about the bank than I do, and about Paris and business generally. She manages everything in the concern."

"You are very fortunate," sighed Jansoulet.

His melancholy was most eloquent touching Mademoiselle Afchin's deficiencies. After a pause the baron continued:

"Marie has a bitter grudge against you, you know. She won't like it when she knows that we have been talking together."

He contracted his heavy eyebrows as if he regretted the reconciliation at the thought of the conjugal scene it would bring upon him.

"But I have never done anything to her," stammered Jansoulet.

"Ah! but you have n't been very polite to her, you know. Think of the insult put upon her at the time of our wedding-call. Your wife sending word to us that she did n't receive former slaves! As if our friendship should not have been stronger than any prejudice. Women don't forget such things."

"But I had nothing to do with it, old fellow. You know how proud those Afchins are."

He was not proud, poor man. His expression was so piteous, so imploring at sight of his friend's frowning brow, that the baron took pity on him. The cemetery had a decidedly softening effect on the baron!

"Listen, Bernard, there 's only one thing that will do any good. If you wish that we should be friends as we used to be, that these handshakes that we have exchanged should not be wasted, you must induce my wife to be reconciled to you. Without that it 's of no use. When Mademoiselle Afchin shut her door in our faces, you let her do it, did n't you? It 's the same with me; if Marie should say to me when I go home: 'I don't want you to be friends,' all my protestations would n't prevent me from throwing you overboard. For there 's no friendship that amounts to anything. The best thing in the world is to have peace in your own house."

"But what am I to do, then?" queried the Nabob, in dismay.

"That 's what I 'm going to tell you. The baroness is at home every Saturday. Come with your wife and call on her day after to-morrow. You will find the best people in Paris at the house. Nothing will be said about the past. The ladies will talk dresses and bonnets, say what women say to each other. And then it will be all settled. We shall be friends again as in the old days; and if you 're in the hole, why, we 'll pull you out."

"Do you think so? It's a fact that I am in very deep," said the other, shaking his head.

Once more Hemerlingue's cunning eyes disappeared between his cheeks, like two flies in butter.

"*Dame!* yes, I've played pretty close. You don't lack skill. That stroke of loaning fifteen millions to the bey was very shrewd. Ah! you're a cool one; but you don't hold your cards right. Others can see your hand."

Thus far they had spoken in undertones, as if awed by the silence of the great necropolis; but gradually selfish interests raised their tones, even amid the proofs of their nothingness displayed upon all those flat stones covered with dates and figures, as if death were simply a matter of time and reckoning, the desired solution of a problem.

Hemerlingue enjoyed seeing his friend so humble, he gave him advice concerning his business affairs, with which he seemed to be thoroughly acquainted. According to his view, the Nabob could still get out of his difficulties in very good shape. Everything depended on the confirmation of his election, on having another card to play. Then it must be played judiciously. But Jansoulet had no confidence. In losing Mora he had lost everything.

"You have lost Mora, but you have found me. One's worth as much as the other," said the baron, calmly.

"But no, you see yourself it's impossible. It's too late. Le Merquier has finished his report. It's a terrible report, so it seems."

Copyright 1898 by Louis Prang & Co.

Engd & Ptd Prang

another at equal intervals, of which each forward impulse of the sea consists at flood tide. In the hollows between, lights were already twinkling, like ship's lanterns, through the ascending purple haze; chimneys towered aloft like masts or funnels of steamers belching forth smoke; and whirling it all about in its undulating motion, the Parisian ocean seemed to be bringing it nearer to the dark shore in successive series of three bounds, each time less energetic than the last. The sky had become much brighter, as it often does toward the close of rainy days, a boundless sky, tinged with the hues of dawn, against which, upon the family tomb of the Moras, four allegorical figures stood forth, imploring, contemplative, pensive, the dying day exaggerating the sublimity of their attitudes. Naught remained of the orations, the perfunctory official condolences. The trampled grass all around, masons occupied in washing the spots of plaster from the threshold, were all that recalled the recent interment.

Suddenly the door of the ducal cavern closed in all its metallic ponderosity. Thenceforth the former minister of State was alone, quite alone, in the darkness of his night, more dense than that just creeping up from the garden below, invading the winding avenues, the stairways surrounding the bases of columns, pyramids, crypts of every kind, whose summits died more slowly. Gravediggers, all white with the chalky whiteness of dried bones, passed with their tools and their baskets. Stealthy mourners, tearing themselves

away regretfully from tears and prayer, crept along the hedges, brushing them in their silent flight, like the flight of night-birds, while on the outskirts of Père-Lachaise voices arose, melancholy voices announcing the hour for closing. The cemetery day was done. The city of the dead, given back to nature, became an immense forest with cross-roads marked by crosses. In the heart of a valley lights shone in the windows of a keeper's house. A shiver ran through the air and lost itself in whisperings at the end of interlaced paths.

"Let us go," said the two old comrades, yielding gradually to the influence of the twilight, which seemed colder there than elsewhere; but, before they turned away, Hemerlingue, following out his thought, pointed to the monument, with the draperies and outstretched hands of the carved figures like wings at the four corners:

"There was a man who understood all about keeping up appearances."

Jansoulet took his arm to assist him in the descent.

"Oh! yes, he was strong. But you are stronger than anybody else," he said in his fervid Gascon accent.

Hemerlingue did not protest.

"I owe it all to my wife. So I urge you to make your peace with her, because if you don't —"

"Oh! never fear — we will come Saturday; but you will go with me to Le Merquier."

And as the two silhouettes, one tall and square-

shouldered, the other short and stout, disappeared in the windings of the great labyrinth, as Jansoulet's voice, guiding his friend, with a "This way, old fellow — lean on me," gradually died away, a stray beam of the setting sun fell upon the plateau behind them, and lighted the colossal bust of Balzac looking after them with its expressive face, its noble brow from which the long hair was brushed back, its powerful and sarcastic lip.

XX.

BARONESS HEMERLINGUE.

AT the farther end of the long archway beneath which were the offices of Hemerlingue and Son, a dark tunnel which Père Joyeuse had for ten years bedecked and illumined with his dreams, a monumental staircase with wrought-iron rail, a staircase of old Paris, ascended to the left, leading to the baroness's salons, whose windows looked on the courtyard just above the counting-room, so that, during the warm season, when everything was open, the chink of the gold pieces, the noise made by piles of crowns toppling over on the counters, slightly deadened by the rich hangings at the long windows, formed a sort of commercial accompaniment to the subdued conversations carried on by worldly Catholicism.

That detail was responsible for the peculiar physiognomy of that salon, no less peculiar than the woman who presided over it, mingling a vague odor of the sacristy with the excitement of the Bourse and the most consummate worldliness, heterogeneous elements which constantly met and came in contact there, but remained separate, just

as the Seine separates the noble Catholic faubourg under whose auspices the notorious conversion of the Moslem woman took place, from the financial quarters in which Hemerlingue's life and his associations were located. Levantine society, which is quite numerous in Paris, consisting principally of German Jews, bankers or commission merchants, who, after making enormous fortunes in the Orient, continue in business here in order not to lose the habit of it, was very regular in its attendance on the baroness's days. Tunisians sojourning in Paris never failed to call upon the wife of the great banker, who was in favor at home, and old Colonel Brahim, the bey's chargé d'affaires, with his drooping lips and his lustreless eyes, took his nap every Saturday in the corner of the same divan.

"Your salon smells of burning flesh, my god-daughter," the old Princesse de Dions said laughingly to the newly-christened Marie, whom she and Maître Le Merquier had held at the baptismal font; but the presence of that crowd of heretics, Jews, Mussulmans and even renegades, those fat women with pimply faces, gaudily dressed, loaded down with gold and earrings, "veritable bales" of finery, did not prevent Faubourg Saint-Germain from calling upon, surrounding and watching over the young neophyte, the plaything of those noble dames, a very pliant, very docile doll, whom they took about and exhibited, quoting her *naïve* evangelical remarks, especially interesting by way of contrast to her past. Perhaps there found its way into the hearts of those amiable patronesses the

hope of encountering in that company fresh from the Orient an opportunity to make a new conversion, to fill the aristocratic mission chapel once more with the touching spectacle of one of those baptisms of adults, which carry you back to the early days of the faith, to the banks of the Jordan, and are soon followed by the first communion, the rebaptizing, the confirmation, all affording pretexts for the godmother to accompany her goddaughter, to guide that young soul, to look on at the ingenuous transports of a new-born faith, and at the same time to display costumes deftly varied and shaded to suit the brilliancy or the solemnity of the ceremony. But it does not often happen that a baron prominent in financial circles brings to Paris an Armenian slave whom he has made his lawful wife.

A slave! That was the stain in the past of that woman of the Orient, purchased long ago in the slave-mart at Adrianople for the Emperor of Morocco, then, upon the Emperor's death and the dispersion of his harem, sold to the young Bey Ahmed. Hemerlingue had married her on her exit from that second seraglio, but was unable to induce society to receive her in Tunis, where no woman, be she Moor, Turk, or European, will ever consent to treat a former slave as an equal, by virtue of a prejudice not unlike that which separates the Creole from the most perfectly disguised quadroon. There is an invincible repugnance there on that subject, which the Hemerlingue family found even in Paris, where the foreign

colonies form little clubs overflowing with local susceptibilities and traditions. Thus Yumina passed two or three years in utter solitude, of which she was able to turn to good account all the bitterness of heart and all the leisure hours; for she was an ambitious woman of extraordinary strength of will and obstinacy. She learned the French language thoroughly, said adieu forever to her embroidered jackets and pink silk trousers, succeeded in adapting her figure and her gait to European garb, to the embarrassment of long skirts; and one evening, at the opera, displayed to the marvelling Parisians the figure, still a little uncivilized, but elegant, refined and so original, of a female Mussulman in a décolleté costume by Léonard.

The sacrifice of her religion followed close upon that of her costume. Madame Hemerlingue had long since abandoned all Mohammedan practices, when Maître Le Merquier, the intimate friend of the family and her cicerone in Paris, pointed out that a formal conversion of the baroness would open to her the doors of that portion of Parisian society which seems to have become more and more difficult of access, in proportion as the society all around it has become more democratic. Faubourg Saint-Germain once conquered, all the rest would follow. And so it proved that when, after the sensation occasioned by the baptism, it became known that the greatest names of France did not disdain to assemble at Baroness Hemerlingue's Saturdays, Mesdames Guggenheim,

Fuernberg, Caraïscaki, Maurice Trott, all wives of Fez millionaires and illustrious in the market-places of Tunis, renounced their prejudices and prayed to be admitted to the ex-slave's receptions. Madame Jansoulet alone, newly landed in France with a stock of Oriental ideas impeding circulation in her mind, as her nargileh, her ostrich eggs and all the rest of her Tunisian trash impeded it in her apartments, protested against what she called impropriety, cowardice, and declared that she would never step foot inside "that creature's" doors. Immediately a slight retrograde movement took place among Mesdames Guggenheim, Caraïscaki, and other bales of finery, as always happens in Paris whenever obstinate resistance from some quarter to the regularizing of an irregular state of affairs leads to regrets and defections. They had advanced too far to withdraw, but they determined that the value of their complaisance, of the sacrifice of their prejudices should be more fully understood; and Baroness Marie realized the difference simply from the patronizing tone of the Levantines, who called her "my dear child — my good girl," with haughty condescension not unmingled with contempt. Thereafter her hatred of the Jansoulets knew no bounds, a complicated, savage, seraglio hatred, with strangling and secret drowning at the end, an operation rather more difficult of performance in Paris than on the shores of the Lake of El-Baheira, but she was already preparing the bow-string and stout bag.

That implacable hatred being well known and

understood, we can imagine the surprise and excitement in that exotic corner of society, when it was reported that not only did the stout Afchin — as those ladies called her — consent to meet the baroness, but was to call first upon her on her next Saturday. You may be sure that neither the Fuernbergs nor the Trotts proposed to miss that occasion. The baroness for her part did all that she could to give the utmost possible publicity to that solemn act of reparation, wrote notes and made calls and played her cards so well that, notwithstanding the fact that the season was very far advanced, Madame Jansoulet, if she had arrived at the mansion in Faubourg Saint-Honoré about four o'clock, might have seen before the lofty arched gateway, beside the Princesse de Dions' quiet livery of the color of dead leaves, and many genuine coats of arms, the showy, pretentious crests, the multi-colored wheels of a multitude of financiers' equipages and the tall powdered lackeys of the Caraïscakis.

Above, in the reception-rooms, there was the same strange and gorgeous medley. There was a constant going and coming over the carpets of the first two rooms, which were quite deserted, a rustling of silk dresses to and from the boudoir, where the baroness received, dividing her attentions and her cajoleries between the two very distinct camps; on one side dark dresses, modest in appearance, whose richness was discernible to none but practised eyes, on the other a tumultuous springtime of bright colors, expansive waists, dia-

monds in profusion, floating sashes, styles for exportation, wherein one could detect a sort of regretful longing for a warmer climate and a luxurious, ostentatious life. Fans waving majestically here, discreet whispering there. Very few men, two or three youths, very thoughtful, silent and inactive, sucking the heads of their canes, several stooping figures, standing behind their wives' broad backs, talking with their heads lowered as if they were discussing smuggling expeditions; in a corner the beautiful, patriarchal beard and violet hood of an orthodox Armenian bishop.

The baroness, in her efforts to bring these discordant social elements together and to keep her salons full until the famous interview, constantly moved about, carried on ten different conversations at once, raising her soft, melodious voice to the purring pitch that distinguishes Oriental women, — a wheedling, seductive voice, and a mind as supple as her waist, opening all sorts of subjects, and, as convention requires, mingling fashions and sermons on charity, theatres and auction sales, — the scandalmonger and the confessor. She possessed a great personal charm in addition to this acquired science of entertaining, a science visible even in her very simple black dress, which brought out in relief her cloistral pallor, her houri-like eyes, her smooth, glossy hair, parted above a narrow, unwrinkled brow, — a brow whose mystery was accentuated by the too thin lips, closing to the curious the whole varied, adventurous past of that ex-odalisque, who was of no age, had no

knowledge of the date of her birth, did not remember that she had ever been a child.

Clearly, if the absolute power of evil, very rarely found in women, whom their impressionable physical nature subjects to so many varying currents, could exist in a human soul, it would be found in the soul of that slave trained to concessions and fawning, rebellious but patient, and thoroughly self-controlled, like all those whom the habit of wearing a veil lowered over their eyes has accustomed to lying without danger and without scruple.

At that moment no one could have suspected the agony of suspense from which she was suffering, to see her kneeling in front of the princess, a good-humored old woman, of unceremonious manners, of whom La Fuernberg constantly said: "Well, if she 's a princess!"

"Oh! godmother, don't go yet, I beg you!"

She overwhelmed her with all sorts of fascinating little tricks of action and expression, without acknowledging, of course, that she was determined to detain her until Jansoulet's arrival, in order to make her contribute to her triumph.

"You see," said the good woman, pointing to the Armenian, sitting, majestic and solemn, his tasselled hat on his knees, "I have to take poor monseigneur to the *Grand-Saint-Christophe* to buy medals. He could never do it without me."

"But I want you to stay. You must. Just a few minutes more."

And the baroness glanced furtively toward the

gorgeous, old-fashioned clock hanging in a corner of the salon.

Five o'clock already, and the stout Afchin did not come. The Levantines began to laugh behind their fans. Luckily, tea had just been served, and Spanish wines, and a quantity of delicious Turkish cakes, which were found nowhere else, and the receipts for which, brought to Paris by the ex-slave, are preserved in harems, as certain secrets connected with the finest confectionery are preserved in our convents. That made a diversion. Hemerlingue, who came from his office from time to time on Saturdays to pay his respects to the ladies, was drinking a glass of madeira at the small table on which the refreshments were served, talking with Maurice Trott, formerly Said-Pacha's bath-master, when his wife, always mild and tranquil externally, approached him. He knew what fierce wrath must be hidden beneath that impenetrable calm, and he asked her timidly, in an undertone:

"No one?"

"No one. You see to what an outrage you have exposed me!"

She smiled, her eyes half-closed, as she removed with the ends of her fingers a crumb that had lodged in his long black whiskers; but her transparent little nostrils quivered with awe-inspiring eloquence.

"Oh! she will come," said the banker, with his mouth full. "I am sure she will come."

A rustling of silk, of a train being adjusted in the adjoining room, caused the baroness to turn

her head quickly. To the great delight of the cluster of "bales" in one corner, who were watching everything, it was not she who was expected.

She bore but little resemblance to Mademoiselle Afchin, the tall, graceful blonde, with the tired features and irreproachable toilet, worthy in every respect to bear a name as illustrious as that of Dr. Jenkins. In the last two or three months the beautiful Madame Jenkins had changed greatly, had grown much older. There comes a time in the life of a woman who has long retained her youth, when the years which have passed over her head without leaving a wrinkle write themselves down pitilessly all at once in ineffaceable marks. We no longer say when we see her: "How lovely she is!" but, "She must have been very lovely." And that cruel fashion of speaking of the past, of referring to a distant period what was a visible fact but yesterday, constitutes a beginning of old age and of retirement, — a substitution of reminiscences for all past triumphs. Was it the disappointment of seeing the doctor's wife instead of Madame Jansoulet, or was the discredit which the Duc de Mora's death had brought upon the fashionable doctor destined to overflow upon her who bore his name? There was something of both those causes, and perhaps of another as well, in the cold welcome which the baroness accorded Madame Jenkins. A murmured greeting, a few hurried words, and she returned to the battalion of noble dames who were nibbling away with great zest. The salon became animated under the influence of the

Spanish wines. People no longer whispered; they talked. Lamps were brought in and imparted additional brilliancy to the occasion, but announced that it was very near its end, as several persons who had no interest in the great event were already moving toward the door. And the Jansoulets did not come.

Suddenly there was a heavy, hurried step. The Nabob appeared, alone, buttoned into his black frock-coat, correctly gloved and cravatted, but with distorted features and haggard eye, still trembling from the terrible scene in which he had just taken part.

She had refused to come.

In the morning he had told Madame's women to have her dressed at three o'clock, as he was accustomed to do whenever he took the Levantine abroad with him, for he found it necessary to impart motion to that indolent creature, who, being incapable of assuming any responsibility whatsoever, allowed others to think, to decide and to act for her, although she was quite willing to go wherever he chose, when she was once started. And he relied upon that willingness to enable him to take her to Hemerlingue's house. But when, after breakfast, Jansoulet, fully dressed, magnificent, perspiring in his struggles to put on his gloves, sent to ask if Madame would soon be ready, he was told that Madame was not going out. It was a serious crisis, so serious that, discarding the mediation of valets and maids, through whom their conjugal interviews were usually con-

ducted, he ran upstairs four stairs at a time, and entered the Levantine's luxurious apartments like a gust of the mistral.

She was still in bed, clad in the ample open-work tunic in silk of two colors, which the Moors call a *djebba*, and in one of their gold-embroidered caps from which her beautiful heavy black mane escaped in tangled masses around her moon-like face, flushed by the hearty meal she had just finished. The sleeves of the *djebba* were turned back, disclosing two enormous, shapeless arms, laden with bracelets, with long slender chains wandering amid a wilderness of little mirrors, red chaplets, boxes of perfume, microscopic pipes, cigarette cases, the trivial toy-shop display of a Moorish beauty at her hour for rising.

The bedroom, heavy with the opium-laden, suffocating odor of Turkish tobacco, presented the same disorderly aspect. Negresses went in and out, slowly removing their mistress's coffee service, her favorite gazelle was lapping a cup which he had overturned on the carpet with his slender nose, while the dark-browed Cabassu, seated at the foot of the bed with touching familiarity, was reading aloud to Madame a drama in verse soon to be produced at Cardaillac's theatre. The Levantine was amazed, absolutely stupefied by the work.

"My dear," she said to Jansoulet, in her thick Flemish accent, "I don't know what our manager is thinking about. I am just reading that play, *Révolte*, that he is so crazy over. Why, it's a frightful thing! It's never been on the stage."

"What do I care for your stage?" cried Jansoulet fiercely, despite all his respect for the daughter of the Afchins. "What! you're not dressed yet? Weren't you told that we were going out?"

She had been told, but she had begun to read this idiotic play.

"We will go out to-morrow," she said in her sleepy tone.

"To-morrow! Impossible! We are expected to-day without fail. A very important visit."

"Where are we to go, pray?"

He hesitated a second, then answered:

"To Hemerlingue's."

She looked up at him with her great eyes, convinced that he was laughing at her. Thereupon he told her of his meeting with the baron at Mora's funeral and the agreement they had made.

"Go there if you choose," she said coldly; "but you know me very little if you think that I, an Afchin, will ever set foot inside that slave's door."

Cabassu, seeing the turn that the discussion was taking, had prudently disappeared in an adjoining room, the five books of *Révolte* in a pile under his arm.

"Stay," said the Nabob to his wife, "it is clear that you don't understand the terrible plight I am in. Listen."

Heedless of the maids and negresses, with the Oriental's sovereign indifference for the servant class, he began to draw the picture of his great embarrassment, his property in Tunis seized, his

credit in Paris lost, his whole life hanging in suspense on the decision of the Chamber, Hemerlingue's influence with the man who was to make the report, and the absolute necessity of sacrificing all self-love to such momentous interests. He talked with great warmth, eager to persuade her, to take her with him. But she replied, simply: "I will not go," as if it were a matter of an expedition of no possible consequence, so long that it was likely to tire her.

"Come, come, it is n't possible that you would say such a thing," he continued, quivering with excitement. "Remember that my fortune is at stake, the future of your children, the very name you bear. Everything is staked on this one concession, which you cannot refuse to make."

He might have talked thus for hours, he would still have been met by the same determined, invincible obstinacy. A Mademoiselle Afchin could not call upon a slave.

"I tell you, madame," he exclaimed, savagely, "that slave is worth more than you. By her shrewdness she has doubled her husband's wealth, while you on the contrary — "

For the first time in the twelve years of their married life Jansoulet dared to oppose his wife's will. Was he ashamed of that crime of *lèse-majesté* or did he realize that such a declaration might dig an impassable abyss between them? At all events he changed his tone at once and knelt beside the low bed, with the affectionate, smiling tone one employs to make children listen to reason.

"My dear little Marthe, I implore you — get up and dress yourself. It's for your own interest that I ask you to do it, for your luxury, for your comfort. What will become of you if, by a mere whim, by naughty wilfulness, we are to be reduced to poverty?"

The word "poverty" conveyed absolutely no meaning to the Levantine. You could speak of it before her as you speak of death before small children. It failed to move her, as she had no idea what it was. At all events she was obstinately determined to remain in bed in her *djebba*, for, to emphasize her decision, she lighted a fresh cigarette from the one she had just finished, and while the Nabob enveloped his "darling little wife" in apologies and prayers and supplications, promising her a diadem of pearls a hundred times more beautiful than hers if she would come, she watched the heady smoke float up to the painted ceiling and wrapped herself in it as in imperturbable tranquillity. Finally, in face of that persistent refusal, that silence, that forehead upon which he detected the barrier of unconquerable obstinacy, Jansoulet gave rein to his wrath and drew himself up to his full height.

"Very good," said he, "I say you shall."

He turned to the negresses:

"Dress your mistress, at once."

And the boor that he really was, the son of the Southern junk-dealer coming to the surface in that crisis, which moved him to the depths of his being, he threw back the bedclothes with a brutal,

contemptuous gesture, tossing the innumerable gewgaws they held to the floor, and forcing the half-naked Levantine to jump to her feet with a promptitude most remarkable in that bulky personage. She roared under the outrage, gathered the folds of her tunic about her misshapen bust, fixed her little cap crosswise over her falling hair, and began to blackguard her husband.

"Never, you hear me, never — you shall never drag me to that — "

Filth poured from her heavy lips as from the mouth of a drain. Jansoulet might well have believed that he was in one of the frightful dens along the water front in Marseille, listening to a quarrel between a prostitute and a *nervi*, or looking on at some open-air fracas between Genoese, Maltese and Provençal women gleaning on the quay around bags of grain in process of unloading, and reviling each other at full speed in eddies of golden dust. She was the typical seaport Levantine, the spoiled, neglected child, who from her terrace, or from her gondola, in the evening, has heard sailors cursing one another in all the languages of the Latin seas, and has remembered everything. The wretched man stared at her, horrified and dismayed at what she compelled him to hear, at her grotesque figure, foaming at the mouth and sputtering:

"No, I won't go — no, I won't go!"

And she was the mother of his children, an Afchin!

Suddenly, at the thought that his fate was in that

woman's hands, that she had only to put on a dress to save him, and that time was flying, that it would soon be too late, a gust of crime rushed to his brain, distorted all his features. He rushed at her, opening and closing his hands with such a terrible expression that the daughter of the Afchins, in deadly terror, darted toward the door through which the *masseur* had just left the room, calling:

"Aristide!"

That cry, that voice, his wife's evident intimacy with his lieutenant — Jansoulet stopped, his frantic anger passed away, and he rushed from the room, throwing the doors open, more eager to escape the disaster and the horror whose presence he felt in his own house, than to go elsewhere to seek the help that had been promised him.

A quarter of an hour later he made his appearance at Hemerlingue's, making a despairing gesture in the banker's direction as he entered, and approached the baroness, stammering the ready-made phrase that he had heard repeated so often on the evening of his own ball: "His wife was very ill — in despair that she could not —" She did not give him time to finish, but rose slowly, like a long, slender snake in the crosswise folds of her clinging skirt, and said, in her schoolgirl accent, without looking at him: "Oh! *I* knew — *I* knew;" then moved away and paid no further heed to him. He tried to accost Hemerlingue, but that gentleman seemed deeply absorbed in his conversation with Maurice Trott. Thereupon he went and sat down beside Madame Jenkins, whose

isolation was no less marked than his. But, while he talked with the poor woman, who was as languid as he himself was preoccupied, he watched the baroness do the honors of that salon, so much more comfortable than his own great gilded halls.

The guests were taking their leave. Madame Hemerlingue escorted some of the ladies to the door, bent her head beneath the benediction of the Armenian bishop, bowed smilingly to the young dandies with canes, bestowed upon every one the proper variety of salutation, with perfect self-possession; and the poor devil could not avoid a mental comparison between that Oriental slave become such a thorough Parisian, of such marked distinction in the most refined society on earth, and that other woman, the European enervated by the Orient, brutalized by Turkish tobacco and bloated by a life of sloth. His ambition, his pride as a husband were disappointed, humiliated in that union of which he now saw the peril and the emptiness, the last cruel blow of destiny which deprived him even of the refuge of domestic happiness against all his public misfortunes.

Gradually the salons became empty. The Levantines disappeared one after another, each leaving an immense void in her place. Madame Jenkins had gone, and only two or three women, strangers to Jansoulet, remained, among whom the mistress of the house seemed to be seeking refuge from him. But Hemerlingue was at liberty, and the Nabob joined him just as he was

sidling furtively away in the direction of his offices, which were on the same floor opposite the state apartments. Jansoulet went out with him, forgetting in his confusion to salute the baroness; and when they were safely out on the landing, arranged as a reception-room, the corpulent Hemerlingue, who had been very cold and reserved so long as he felt his wife's eye upon him, assumed a somewhat more open expression.

"It's a great pity," he said in a low tone, as if he were afraid of being overheard, "that Madame Jansoulet would not come."

Jansoulet replied with a gesture of despair and savage helplessness.

"Too bad — too bad!" said the other, blowing his nose and feeling in his pocket for his key.

"Look here, old fellow," said the Nabob, taking his arm, "because our wives don't hit it off together, is no reason — That does n't prevent our remaining friends. What a nice little chat we had the other day, eh?"

"To be sure," said the baron, withdrawing his hand to unlock the door, which opened noiselessly, disclosing the lofty private office with its one lamp burning in front of the capacious, empty armchair.

"Ya didon, Mouci,"[1] said the poor Nabob, trying to jest, and resorting to the *sabir* patois to remind his old chum of all the pleasant reminiscences they had overhauled the day before. "Our visit to Le Merquier still holds. The pic-

[1] Ah! I say, Monsieur.

ture we were going to offer him, you know. What day shall we go?"

"Ah! yes, Le Merquier. To be sure. Well, very soon. I will write you."

"Sure? You know it's very urgent."

"Yes, yes, I'll write you. Adieu."

And the fat man closed his door hastily as if he feared that his wife might appear.

Two days later the Nabob received a note from Hemerlingue, almost undecipherable with its little fly-tracks, complicated by abbreviations more or less commercial, behind which the ex-sutler concealed his absolute lack of orthography:

"MON CH / ANC / CAM / — Je ne puis décid / t'accom / chez Le Merq /. Trop d'aff / en ce mom /. D'aill / v / ser / mieux seuls pour caus /. Vas-y carrém /. On t'att /. R / Cassette, tous les mat / de 8 à 10.

"A toi cor /

"HEM /."[1]

Below, by way of postscript, in a hand equally fine, but much clearer, was written very legibly:

"A religious picture, if possible."

What was he to think of that letter? Was it dictated by real friendliness or polite dissimulation? At all events, further hesitation was out of the question. The time was very short. So

[1] "MY DEAR OLD COMRADE, — I cannot see my way to accompanying you to see Le Merquier. Too busy just now. Indeed, you will do better to talk with him alone. Go there openly. You are expected. Rue Cassette, every morning, 8 to 10.

"Yours cordially,

"HEMERLINGUE."

Jansoulet made a brave effort, for Le Merquier frightened him sadly, and went to his office one morning.

This strange Paris of ours, in its population and its varied aspects, seems like a map of the whole world. We find in the Marais narrow streets with old, carved, vermiculated doors, with overhanging gables, with balconies *en moucharabies*, which make one think of old Heidelberg. Faubourg Saint-Honoré where it is broadest, near the Russian church with its white minarets and golden balls, recalls a bit of Moscow. On Montmartre there is a picturesque, crowded spot that is pure Algiers. Low, clean little houses, with their copper-plates on the doors, and their private gardens, stand in line along typical English streets between Neuilly and the Champs-Élysées; while the whole circuit of the apse of Saint-Sulpice, Rue Férou, Rue Cassette, lying placidly in the shadow of the great towers, roughly paved, with knockers on the front doors, seems to have been transplanted from some pious provincial city, — Tours or Orléans for instance, in the neighborhood of the cathedral and the bishop's palace, where tall trees tower above the walls and sway to the music of the bells and the responses.

There, in the vicinity of the Catholic club, of which he had been chosen honorary president, lived Maître Le Merquier, advocate, Deputy for Lyon, man of business of all the great religious communities of France, and the man whom Hemerlingue, in pursuance of an idea of great pro-

fundity for that bulky individual, had intrusted with the legal affairs of his firm.

Arriving about nine o'clock at an ancient mansion, whose ground-floor was occupied by a religious publishing house sleeping peacefully in its odor of the sacristy and of coarse paper for printing miracles, and ascending the broad staircase, the walls of which were whitewashed like those of a convent, Jansoulet felt permeated with that provincial and Catholic atmosphere wherein the memories of his Southern past revived, childish impressions still fresh and intact, thanks to his long exile, impressions which the son of Françoise had had neither time nor occasion to disown since his arrival in Paris. Worldly hypocrisy had assumed all its different shapes before him, tried all its masks, except that of religious integrity. So that he refused in his own mind to believe in the venality of a man who lived in such surroundings. Ushered into the advocate's waiting-room, a large parlor with curtains of starched muslin as fine as that of which surplices are made, its only ornament a large and beautiful copy of Tintoret's *Dead Christ* over the door, his uncertainty and anxiety changed to indignant conviction. It was not possible. He had been misled touching Le Merquier. Surely it was an impudent slander, such as Paris is so ready to spread; or perhaps they were laying another one of those wicked traps for him, against which he had done nothing but stumble for six months past. No, that timid conscience renowned at the Palais de Justice and the

Chamber, that cold, austere man could not be dealt with like those coarse, pot-bellied pashas, with their loose belts and floating sleeves so convenient as receptacles for purses of sequins. He would expose himself to a shameful refusal, to the natural revolt of outraged honor, if he should attempt such methods of bribery.

The Nabob said this to himself as he sat on the oak bench that ran around the room, polished by serge gowns and the rough broadcloth of cassocks. Notwithstanding the early hour, several persons beside himself were waiting. A Dominican striding back and forth, ascetic and serene of face, two nuns buried in their hoods, telling their beads on long rosaries which measured their time of waiting, priests from the diocese of Lyon, recognizable from the shape of their hats, and other persons of stern and meditative mien seated by the great table of black wood which stood in the centre of the room, and turning the leaves of some of those edifying periodicals which are printed on the hill of Fourvières, the *Echoes from Purgatory*, or *Marie's Rose-bush*, and which give as premiums to yearly subscribers papal indulgences, absolution for future sins. A few words in a low voice, a stifled cough, the faint murmuring of the two sisters' prayer reminded Jansoulet of the confused, far-away sensation of hours of waiting around the confessional, in a corner of his village church, when the great religious festivals were drawing near.

At last it came his turn to enter the sanctum,

and if any shadow of doubt concerning Maître Le Merquier remained in his mind, that doubt vanished when he saw that high-studded office, simple and severe in appearance, — although somewhat more decorated than the waiting-room — of which the advocate made a framework for his rigid principles and his long, thin, stooping, narrow-shouldered person, eternally squeezed into a black coat too short in the sleeves, from which protruded two flat, square, black hands, two clubs of India ink covered with swollen veins like hieroglyphics. In the clerical deputy's sallow complexion, the complexion of the Lyonnais turned mouldy between his two rivers, there was a certain animation, due to his varying expression, sometimes sparkling but impenetrable behind his spectacles, more frequently keen, suspicious and threatening over those same spectacles, and surrounded by the retreating shadow which follows the arch of the eyebrow when the eye is raised and the head low.

After a greeting that was almost cordial in comparison with the cold salutation which the two colleagues exchanged at the Chamber, an "I was expecting you," uttered with a purpose perhaps, the advocate waved the Nabob to the chair near his desk, bade the smug domestic, dressed in black from head to foot, not to "tighten the sack-cloth with the scourge," but to stay away until the bell should ring for him, arranged a few scattered papers, and then, crossing his legs, burying himself in his armchair in the crouching attitude of the man who is making ready to listen, who becomes

all ears, he took his chin in his hand and sat with his eyes fixed on a long curtain of green ribbed velvet that fell from the ceiling to the floor opposite him.

It was a decisive moment, an embarrassing situation. But Jansoulet did not hesitate. It was one of the poor Nabob's boasts that he understood men as well as Mora. And the keen scent, which, he said, had never deceived him, warned him that he was at that moment in presence of a rigid, immovable honesty, a conscience of solid rock unassailable by pick-axe or powder. "My conscience!" So he suddenly changed his programme, cast aside the stratagems, the equivocal hints, in which his open, courageous nature was wallowing about, and with head erect and heart laid bare, talked to that upright man in a language which he was built to understand.

"Do not be surprised, my dear colleague," — his voice trembled at first, but soon became firm in his conviction of the justice of his cause — "do not be surprised that I have come to see you here instead of simply asking to be heard by the third committee. The explanations that I have to put before you are of such a delicate and confidential nature that it would have been impossible for me to give them in a public place, before my assembled colleagues."

Maître Le Merquier looked at the curtain over his spectacles with an air of dismay. Evidently the conversation was taking an unexpected turn.

"I do not touch upon the substance of the question," continued the Nabob. "I am sure that your

report is impartial and just, such a report as your conscience must have dictated. But certain disgusting slanders have been set on foot concerning myself, to which I have not replied, and which may have influenced the opinion of the committee. That is the subject on which I wish to speak to you. I know the confidence which your colleagues repose in you, Monsieur Le Merquier, and that, when I have convinced you, your word will be sufficient and I shall not be obliged to parade my distress before the full committee. You know the charge. I refer to the most horrible, the most shameful one. There are so many that one might make a mistake among them. My enemies have given names, dates, addresses. Be it so! I bring you the proofs of my innocence. I lay them before you, before you only; for I have the gravest reasons for keeping this whole affair secret."

Thereupon he showed the advocate a certificate from the consulate at Tunis that in twenty years he had left the principality but twice, the first time to see his father who lay dying at Bourg-Saint-Andéol, the second time to pay a visit of three days at his Château of Saint-Romans with the bey.

"How does it happen that with such a decisive document in my hands I have not cited my defamers before the courts to contradict them and put them to shame? Alas! Monsieur, there are family bonds that cut into the flesh. I had a brother, a poor weak spoiled creature, who rolled for a long while in the filth of Paris, left his intelli-

gence and his honor here. Did he really descend to that stage of degradation at which I have been placed in his name? I have not dared to ascertain. What I can say is that my poor father, who knew more about it than any one else in the family, whispered to me when he was dying: 'Bernard, your brother is killing me. I am dying of shame, my child.'"

He paused for a moment, compelled by his suffocating emotion, then continued:

"My father died, Monsieur Le Merquier, but my mother is still alive, and it is for her sake, for her repose, that I have recoiled, that I still recoil from making public my justification. Thus far the filth that has been thrown at me has not splashed upon her. It does not extend outside a certain social circle, a special class of newspapers, from which the dear woman is a thousand leagues away. But the courts, a law-suit, means the parading of our misfortune from one end of France to the other, the *Messager* articles printed by every newspaper, even those in the retired little place where my mother lives. The slander itself, my defence, both her children covered with shame at one blow, the family name — the old peasant woman's only pride — tarnished forever. That would be too much for her. And really it seems to me that one is enough. That is why I have had the courage to hold my peace, to tire out my enemies, if possible, by my silence. But I need some one to answer for me in the Chamber, I wish to deprive it of the right to eject me for reasons dishonoring to me, and as it

selected you to report upon my election, I have come to tell everything to you, as to a confessor, a priest, begging you not to divulge a word of this conversation, even in the interest of my cause. I ask nothing but that, my dear colleague, — absolute reticence on this subject; for the rest I rely upon your justice and your loyalty."

He rose, prepared to go, and Le Merquier did not stir, still questioning the green hanging in front of him, as if seeking there an inspiration for his reply. At last, —

"It shall be as you wish, my dear colleague," he said. "This confidence shall remain between ourselves. You have told me nothing, I have heard nothing."

The Nabob, still all aflame with his eloquent outburst, which, as it seemed to him, called for a cordial response, a warm grasp of the hand, had a strangely uneasy feeling. That cold manner, that absent expression weighed so heavily upon him, that he was already walking to the door with the awkward salutation of unwelcome visitors. But the other detained him.

"Stay a moment, my dear colleague. How eager you are to leave me! A few moments more, I beg. I am too happy to converse with such a man as you. Especially as we have more than one common bond. Our friend Hemerlingue tells me that you, like myself, are much interested in pictures."

Jansoulet started. The two words "Hemerlingue" and "pictures," meeting so unexpectedly

in the same sentence, brought back all his doubts, all his perplexity. He did not surrender even then, however, but left Le Merquier to put his words forward, one in front of another, feeling the ground for his stumbling advance. He had heard much of his honorable colleague's gallery. Would it be presumptuous for him to ask the favor of being admitted to —?

"Nonsense! why, I should be too highly honored," said the Nabob, tickled in the most sensitive — because it had been the most expensive — part of his vanity; and, glancing about at the walls of the study, he added in the tone of a connoisseur:

"You have some fine examples yourself."

"Oh!" said the other modestly, "a few poor canvases. Pictures are so dear in these days — it's a taste so hard to gratify, a genuinely luxurious passion. A Nabob's passion," he added with a smile and a stealthy glance over his spectacles.

They were two prudent gamblers face to face; Jansoulet, however, was somewhat at fault in that novel situation, in which he was obliged to walk warily, he who knew of no other mode of action than by bold, audacious strokes.

"When I think," murmured the advocate, "that I have spent ten years covering these walls, and that I still have this whole panel to fill!"

In truth, in the most conspicuous part of the high partition there was an empty space, a vacated space rather, for a great gilt-headed nail near the ceiling showed the visible, almost clumsy trace of

the trap set for the poor innocent, who foolishly allowed himself to be taken in it.

"My dear Monsieur Le Merquier," he said, in an engaging, affable tone, "I have a *Virgin* by Tintoret just the size of your panel."

It was impossible to read anything in the advocate's eyes, which had now taken refuge behind their gleaming shelter.

"Permit me to hang it there, opposite your desk. It will give you an excuse for thinking of me sometimes —"

"And for mitigating the strictures of my report, eh, Monsieur?" cried Le Merquier, springing to his feet, a threatening figure, with his hand on the bell. "I have seen many shameless performances in my life, but never anything equal to this. Such offers to me, in my own house!"

"But, my dear colleague, I swear —"

"Show him out," said the advocate to the surly servant who entered the room at that moment; and from the centre of his office, the door remaining open, before the whole parlor, where the prayers had ceased, he pursued Jansoulet, — who turned his back and hastened, mumbling incoherently, toward the outer door — with these crushing words:

"You have insulted the honor of the whole Chamber in my person, Monsieur. Our colleagues shall be informed of it this very day; and, this additional offence being added to the others, you will learn to your sorrow that Paris is not the Orient, and the human conscience is not

shamefully traded in and bartered here as it is there."

Thereupon, having driven the money-changer from the temple, the just man closed his door, and approaching the green curtain, said in a tone which sounded sweet as honey after his pretended anger:

"Was that about right, Baronne Marie?"

XXI.

THE SITTING.

THAT morning there was not, as usual, a grand breakfast-party at number 32 Place Vendôme. So that about one o'clock you might have seen M. Barreau's majestic paunch arrayed in white linen displaying itself at the entrance to the porch, surrounded by four or five scullions in their paper caps and as many grooms in Scotch caps, — an imposing group, which gave the sumptuous mansion the appearance of a hostelry, where the whole staff was taking a breath of fresh air between two arrivals. The resemblance was made complete by the cab stopping in front of the door and the driver lifting down an old-fashioned leather trunk, while a tall old woman in a yellow cap, an erect figure with a little green shawl over her shoulders, leaped lightly to the sidewalk, a basket on her arm, and looked carefully at the number, then approached the group of servants and asked if that was where M. Bernard Jansoulet lived.

"This is the place," was the reply. "But he is n't in."

"That 's no matter," said the old woman, very naturally.

She returned to the driver, bade him put her trunk under the porch, and paid him, at once replacing her purse in her pocket with a gesture that said much for provincial distrust.

Since Jansoulet had been Deputy for Corsica, his servants had seen so many strange, foreign-looking creatures alight at his door that they were not greatly surprised at sight of that sunburned woman, with eyes like glowing coals, bearing much resemblance in her simple head-dress to a genuine Corsican, some old psalm-singer straight from the underbrush, but distinguished from newly-arrived islanders by the ease and tranquillity of her manners.

"What do you say, the master is n't in?" she said with an intonation which is much more frequently heard by the hands on a farm, on a *mas* in her province, than by the impertinent lackeys of a great Parisian household.

"No, the master is n't in."

"And the children?"

"They 're taking their lesson. You can't see them."

"And Madame?"

"She 's asleep. No one enters her room before three o'clock."

That seemed to surprise the good woman a little, that any one could stay in bed so late; but the sure instinct which, in default of education, acts as a guide to intelligent natures, prevented her from

saying so to the servants, and she at once asked to speak to Paul de Géry.

"He is travelling."

"Bompain Jean-Baptiste then?"

"He 's at the Chamber with Monsieur."

Her great gray eyebrows contracted.

"No matter; take my trunk upstairs all the same."

And, with a malicious little twitching of the eye, a touch of pride, of vengeance for the insolent glances turned upon her, she added:

"I am his mother."

Scullions and grooms stood aside respectfully. M. Barreau raised his cap:

"I was saying to myself that I had seen Madame somewhere."

"That 's just what I was saying to myself too, my boy," said Mère Jansoulet, shuddering at the memory of the ill-fated festivities in honor of the bey.

"My boy!"—to M. Barreau, to a man of his importance! That instantly placed her very high in the esteem of that little circle.

Ah! grandeurs and splendors did not dazzle her, the brave-hearted old woman. She was no opéra-comique Mère Boby going into ecstasies over the gildings and fine trinkets; the vases of flowers on every landing of the staircase she ascended behind her trunk, the hall-lamps supported by bronze statues, did not prevent her noticing that there was a finger's depth of dust on the stair-rail and that the carpet was torn. They escorted her to the apartments on the second

floor, reserved for the Levantine and the children, and there, in a room used as a linen closet, which was evidently near the school-room, for she could hear a murmur of childish voices, she waited, all alone, her basket on her knees, for her Bernard to return, for her daughter-in-law to awake, or for the great joy of embracing her grandchildren. Nothing could be better adapted than what she saw around her to give her an idea of the confusion of a household given over to servants, where the oversight of the housewife and her far-seeing activity are lacking. In huge wardrobes, all wide open, linen was heaped up pell-mell in shapeless, bulging, tottering piles, — fine sheets, Saxony table linen crumbled and torn, and the locks prevented from working by some stray piece of embroidery which nobody took the trouble to remove. And yet many servants passed through that linen closet, — negresses in yellow madras, who hastily seized a napkin or a table-cloth, heedlessly trampled on those domestic treasures scattered all about, dragged to the end of the room on their great flat feet lace flounces cut from a long skirt which a maid had cast aside, thimble here, scissors there, as a piece of work to be taken up again.

The semi-rustic artisan, which Mère Jansoulet had not ceased to be, was sadly grieved at the sight, wounded in the respect, the affection, the inoffensive mania which is inspired in the provincial housewife by the wardrobe filled with linen, piece by piece, to the very top, full of relics of the poor past, its contents increasing gradually in

quantity and in quality, the first visible symptom of comfortable circumstances, of wealth in a house. Again, that woman always had the distaff in her hand from morning till night, and if the housekeeper was indignant, the spinster could have wept as at a profanation. Finally, unable to endure it longer, she rose, abandoned her patient, watchful attitude, and stooping over, her little green shawl displaced by every movement, began actively to pick up, smooth and fold with care that beautiful linen, as she did on the lawns at Saint-Romans, when she indulged in the amusement of a grand washing, employing twenty women, the baskets overflowing with snow-white folds, the sheets flapping in the morning breeze on the long drying lines. She was deeply engrossed in that occupation, which made her forget her journey, Paris, even the place where she was, when a stout, thickset man, heavily bearded, in varnished boots, and a velvet jacket covering the chest and shoulders of a bull, entered the linen closet.

"Ah! Cabassu."

"You here, Madame Françoise! This is a surprise," said the *masseur*, opening wide his great Japanese idol's eyes.

"Why, yes, good Cabassu, it 's me. I 've just come. And I 'm at work already, as you see. It made my heart bleed to see all this mess."

"So you 've come for the sitting, have you?"

"What sitting?"

"Why, the great sitting of the Corps Législatif. This is the day."

"Faith, no. What difference do you suppose that can make to me? I don't understand anything about such things. No, I came because I wanted to know my little Jansoulets, and then, I was beginning to be uneasy. I've written two or three times now without getting any answer. I was afraid there might be a child sick, or that Bernard's business was in a bad way — all sorts of uncomfortable ideas. I had an attack of great black anxiety, and I started. Everybody's well here, so they tell me?"

"Why, yes, Madame Françoise. Everybody's exceedingly well, thank God!"

"And Bernard? His business? Is it going along to suit him?"

"Oh! you know a man always has his little crosses in this life; however, I don't think he has any reason to complain. But now I think of it, you must be hungry. I'll go and send you something to eat."

He was about to ring, much more self-assured and at home than the old mother. But she checked him.

"No, no, I don't need anything. I still have some of my luncheon left."

She placed two figs and a crust of bread, taken from her basket, on the table, and continued to talk as she ate:

"And what about your affairs, little one? It seems to me you've spruced up mightily since the last time you came to the Bourg. What linen, what clothes! What department are you in?"

"I am professor of massage," said Aristide gravely.

"You a professor!" she exclaimed, with respectful amazement; but she dared not ask him what he taught, and Cabassu, somewhat embarrassed by her questions, hastened to change the subject.

"Suppose I go and fetch the children? Has n't any one told them their grandmother was here?"

"I did n't want to take them away from their work. But I believe the lesson is over now. Listen."

On the other side of the door they heard the impatient stamping of school children longing to be dismissed, eager for room and air; and the old woman listened with delight to the fascinating sounds that increased her maternal longing tenfold, but prevented her from doing anything to satisfy it. At last the door opened. First the tutor appeared, an abbé with a pointed nose and prominent cheek-bones, whom we have seen at the state breakfasts of an earlier day. Having fallen out with his bishop, the ambitious ecclesiastic had left the diocese where he formerly exercised the priestly functions, and, in his precarious position as an irregular member of the clergy — for the clergy has its own Bohemia — was glad of the opportunity to teach the little Jansoulets, recently expelled from Bourdaloue. With the same solemn, arrogant mien, as of one overburdened with responsibility, which the great prelates intrusted with the education of the Dau-

phins of France might assume, he stalked in front of three little fellows, curled and gloved, with oblong hats and short jackets, leather bags slung over their shoulders, and long red stockings reaching to the middle of the leg, the costume of the complete velocipedist about to mount his machine.

"Children," said Cabassu, the intimate friend of the family, "this is Madame Jansoulet, your grandmother, who has come to Paris on purpose to see you."

They halted, very much astonished, arranged according to height, and examined that withered old face between the yellow barbs of the cap, that strange costume, unfamiliar in its simplicity; and their grandmother's astonishment answered theirs, increased by heart-rending disappointment and by the embarrassment she felt in presence of those little gentlemen, who were as stiff and disdainful as the marquises, the counts and the prefects on circuit whom her son used to bring to her at Saint-Romans. In obedience to their tutor's injunction, "to salute their venerable grandmother," they came up one by one and gave her one of the same little handshakes with arms close to their sides of which they had distributed so many among the garrets; indeed, that good woman with the earth-colored face, and neat but very simple clothes, reminded them of their charitable visits from Collège Bourdaloue. They felt between herself and them the same strangeness, the same distance, which no memory, no word from their parents had ever lessened. The abbé realized her embarrass-

ment, and, to banish it, launched forth upon a speech delivered with the throaty voice, the violent gestures common to those men who always think that they have below them the ten steps leading to a pulpit:

"Lo, the day has come, Madame, the great day when Monsieur Jansoulet is to confound his enemies. *Confundantur hostes mei, quia injuste iniquitatem fecerunt in me,* — because they have persecuted me unjustly."

The old woman bowed devoutly to the Church Latin; but her face assumed a vague expression of uneasiness at the idea of enemies and persecutions.

"Those enemies are numerous and powerful, noble lady, but let us not be alarmed beyond measure. Let us have confidence in the decrees of heaven and the justice of our cause. God is in the midst of it and it shall not be shaken. *In medio ejus non commovebitur.*"

A gigantic negro, resplendent in new gold lace, interrupted them to announce that the velocipedes were ready for the daily lesson on the terrace of the Tuileries. Before leaving the room, the children solemnly shook once more the wrinkled, calloused hand of their grandmother, who was watching them walk away, utterly bewildered and with a sore heart, when, yielding to an adorable, spontaneous impulse, the youngest of the three, having reached the door, suddenly turned, pushed the great negro aside, and plunged head foremost, like a little buffalo, into Mère Jansoulet's skirts, throwing his arms around her and holding up to

her his smooth brow splashed with brown curls, with the sweet grace of the child who offers his caress like a flower. Perhaps the little fellow, being nearer the nest and its warmth, the nurse's cradling lap and *patois* ballads, had felt the waves of maternal love of which the Levantine deprived him flowing toward his little heart. The old "Grandma" shuddered from head to foot in her surprise at that instinctive embrace.

"Oh my darling — my darling!" seizing the curly, silky little head which reminded her of another, and kissing it frantically. Then the child released himself and ran away without a word, his hair wet with hot tears.

Left alone with Cabassu, the mother, whom that kiss had consoled, asked for an explanation of the priest's words. — Had her son many enemies, pray?

"Oh!" said Cabassu, "it is not at all surprising in his position."

"But what's all this about this being a great day, and this 'sitting' you all talk about?"

"Why, yes! This is the day when we're to know whether Bernard is to be a deputy or not."

"What? Isn't he one yet? Why, I have told it everywhere in the neighborhood, and I illuminated Saint-Romans a month ago. So I was made to tell a lie!"

The *masseur* had much difficulty in explaining to her the parliamentary formality of testing the validity of elections. She listened with only one ear, feverishly pulling over the linen.

"And that's where my Bernard is at this moment?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Are women allowed to go into this Chamber? Then why is n't his wife there? For I can understand that it 's a great affair for him. On such a day as to-day he will need to feel that all those he loves are beside him. Look you, my boy, you must take me to this sitting. Is it very far?"

"No, very near. Only it must have begun before this. And then," added the Giaour, a little embarrassed, "this is the hour when Madame needs me."

"Ah! Do you teach her this thing that you 're professor of? What do you call it?"

"Massage. It comes down to us from the ancients. There, she 's ringing her bell now. Some one will come to call me. Do you want me to tell her that you are here?"

"No, no, I prefer to go to the Chamber at once."

"But you have no card of admission, have you?"

"Bah! I 'll say that I am Jansoulet's mother and that I have come to hear my son tried."

Poor mother! she did not know how truly she described his position.

"Wait a moment, Madame Françoise. Let me, at least, send some one to show you the way."

"Oh! do you know, I 've never been able to get used to these servant people. I 've a tongue in my head. There are people in the streets; I shall find my way well enough."

He made one last attempt, without disclosing the whole of his thought:

"Be careful. His enemies will speak against him in the Chamber. You will hear things that will hurt you."

Oh! the lovely smile of maternal faith and pride with which she answered:

"Don't I know better than all those people what my son is worth? Is there anything that could make me unjust to him? If so, I must be a mighty ungrateful woman. Nonsense!"

And, with a threatening shake of her cap, she departed.

Straight as a statue, with head erect, the old woman strode along under the arches she had been told to follow, somewhat disturbed by the incessant rumbling of carriages and by her slow progress, unaccompanied by the movement of her faithful distaff, which had not quitted her for fifty years. All these suggestions of enmity, of persecution, the priest's mysterious words, Cabassu's dark hints, excited and terrified her. She found therein an explanation of the presentiments which had taken possession of her so firmly as to tear her away from her habits and her duties, the superintendence of the Château and the care of her invalid. Strangely enough, by the way, since fortune had cast upon her son and her that cloak of gold with its heavy folds, Mère Jansoulet had never become accustomed to it, and was always expecting the sudden disappearance of their splendor. Who could say that the final crash was not

really beginning now? And suddenly, amid these gloomy thoughts, the remembrance of the childish scene of a moment before, of the little one rubbing against her drugget skirt, caused her wrinkled lips to swell in a loving smile, and, in her joy, she murmured in her *patois:*

"Oh! that little fellow!"

A vast, magnificent, dazzling square, two sheaves of water flying upward in silver dust, then a great stone bridge, and at the further end a square building with statues in front of it, and an iron gateway where carriages were standing, people passing through and a knot of police officers. That was the place. She made her way bravely through the crowd as far as a high glass door.

"Your card, my good woman?"

The good woman had no card, but she said simply to one of the ushers with red lapels who were acting as doorkeepers:

"I am Bernard Jansoulet's mother; I have come to attend my boy's sitting."

It was in very truth her boy's sitting; for in that crowd besieging the doors, in the crowd that filled the corridors, the hall, the galleries, the whole palace, the same name was whispered everywhere, accompanied by smiles and muttered comments. A great scandal was expected, shocking revelations by the spokesman of the committee which would doubtless lead to some violent outburst on the part of the savage thus brought to bay; and people crowded thither as to a first performance or the argument of a famous cause. The old mother certainly could

not have made herself heard in the midst of that throng, if the train of gold left by the Nabob wherever he passed, and marking his royal progress, had not made everything smooth for her. She followed an usher through that labyrinth of corridors, folding doors, empty, echoing rooms, filled with a buzzing noise which circulated through the air in the building and passed out through its walls, as if the very stones were impregnated with that verbosity and added the echoes of bygone days to those of all the voices of to-day. Passing through a corridor, she spied a little dark man shouting and gesticulating to the attendants:

"Tell Moussiou Jansoulet zat I am ze deputy-mayor of Sarlazaccio, zat I have been sentenced to five month in prison for him. Zat deserves a card for ze sitting, *Corps de Dieu!*"

Five months in prison on her son's account. How could that be? Anxious beyond words, she arrived at last, with a ringing in her ears, at a landing where there were divers little doors like those of furnished lodgings or theatre boxes, surmounted by different inscriptions: "Senators' Gallery," "Gallery of the Diplomatic Corps," "Members' Gallery." She entered, seeing nothing at first but four or five rows of benches crowded with people; then, on the opposite side of the hall, far away, other galleries equally crowded, separated from her by a vast open space; she leaned, still standing, against the wall, amazed to be there, bewildered, confused. A puff of hot air striking her in the face, the hum of voices ascending from below

drew her down the sloping floor of the gallery, toward the edge of a yawning pit, so to speak, in the centre of the great vessel, where her son must be. Oh, how she would have liked to see him! Thereupon, making herself as small as possible, playing about her with her elbows, sharp and hard as her distaff, she glided, wormed herself along between the wall and the benches, heedless of the outbursts of wrath she aroused, of the contemptuous glances of the women in gorgeous array, whose laces and spring dresses she crushed. For it was a distinctly fashionable society gathering.

Indeed, Mère Jansoulet recognized by his inflexible shirtfront and aristocratic nose the dandified marquis who had visited at Saint-Romans, and who bore so felicitously the name of a gorgeous bird; but he did not look at her. Having thus advanced a few rows, she was checked by the back of a man sitting, an enormous back which completely blocked her path, prevented her from going farther. Luckily, however, by leaning forward a little, she could see almost the whole hall; and those semi-circular rows of desks where the deputies stood in groups, the green hangings on the walls, that pulpit at the rear occupied by a man with a bald head and stern features, all in the quiet gray light falling from above, made her think of a recitation about to commence, preceded by the moving about and chattering of restless pupils.

One thing attracted her attention, the persistence with which all eyes seemed to be turned in the same direction, to be fixed upon the same point of

attraction; and as she followed that current of curiosity which magnetized the whole assemblage, the floor as well as the galleries, she saw what everybody was staring at so earnestly; it was her son.

In the Jansoulets' province there still exists in some old churches, at the back of the choir, halfway up from the crypt, a little stone box, to which lepers were admitted to listen to the services, exhibiting to the curious and fearful throng their pitiable brute-like figures cowering against the holes cut in the wall. Françoise well remembered having seen, in the village in which she was brought up, the leper, the terror of her childhood, listening to the mass in his stone cage, lost in the shadow and in reprobation. When she saw her son sitting alone, far back, with his face in his hands, that picture came to her mind. "One would say he was a leper," muttered the peasant woman. And in very truth the poor Nabob was a moral leper, upon whom his millions brought from the Orient were at that moment imposing the torments of a terrible and mysterious exotic disease. As it happened, the bench upon which he had chosen his seat showed several gaps due to leaves of absence or recent deaths; and while the other deputies talked and laughed together, making signs to one another, he sat silent, apart, the object of the earnest scrutiny of the whole Chamber, — a scrutiny which Mère Jansoulet felt to be ironical, ill-disposed, and which burned her as it passed. How could she let him know that she was there, close at hand,

that one faithful heart was beating not far from his? for he avoided turning toward that gallery. One would have said that he felt that it was hostile, that he was afraid of seeing discouraging things there. Suddenly, at the ringing of a bell on the president's desk, a thrill ran through the assemblage, every head was bent forward in the attentive attitude that immobilizes the features, and a thin man with spectacles, suddenly rising to his feet amid that multitude of seated men — a position which gave him at once the authority of attitude — said, as he opened the pile of papers which he held in his hand:

"Messieurs, I rise in the name of your third committee, to recommend to you that the election in the second district of the department of Corsica be declared void."

In the profound silence following that sentence, which Mère Jansoulet did not understand, the stout creature sitting in front of her began to wheeze violently, and suddenly a lovely woman's face, in the front row of the gallery, turned to make him a rapid sign of intelligence and satisfaction. Her pale brow, thin lips and eyebrows that seemed too black in the white frame of the hat, produced in the good old woman's eyes, although she could not tell why, the painful impression of the first lightning flash when the storm is beginning and the apprehension of the thunderbolt follows the rapid meeting of the fluids.

Le Merquier read his report. The slow, lifeless, monotonous voice, the Lyonnais accent, soft

and drawling, with which the advocate kept time by a movement of the head and shoulders almost like an animal, presented a striking contrast to the savage conciseness of the conclusions. First, a rapid sketch of the electoral irregularities. Never had universal suffrage been treated with such primitive, uncivilized disrespect. At Sarlazaccio, where Jansoulet's opponent seemed likely to carry the day, the ballot-box was destroyed during the night preceding the counting. The same thing, or almost the same, happened at Lévie, at Saint-André, at Avabessa. And these offences were committed by the mayors themselves, who carried the boxes to their houses, broke the seals and tore up the ballots, under cover of their municipal authority. On all sides fraud, intrigue, even violence. At Calcatoggio an armed man, blunderbuss in hand, stood at the window of an inn just opposite the mayor's office throughout the election; and whenever a supporter of Sébastiani, Jansoulet's opponent, appeared on the square, the man pointed his weapon at him: "If you go in, I'll blow out your brains!" Moreover, when we see police commissioners, justices of the peace, sealers of weights and measures daring to transform themselves into electoral agents, intimidating and seducing a people notorious for their subjection to all these tyrannical little local influences, have we not proof positive of unbridled license? Why, even the priests, consecrated pastors, led astray by their zealous interest in the poor-box and the maintenance of their impover-

ished churches, preached a veritable crusade in favor of Jansoulet's election. But an even more powerful, although less respectable, influence was set at work for the good cause, — the influence of bandits. "Yes, bandits, Messieurs, I am not jesting." — And thereupon followed a sketch in bold colors of Corsican banditti in general and the Piedigriggio family in particular.

The Chamber listened with close attention and with considerable uneasiness. The fact was that it was an official candidate whose actions were being thus described, and those strange electoral morals were indigenous in that privileged island, the cradle of the imperial family, and so intimately connected with the destiny of the dynasty that an attack on Corsica seemed to react upon the sovereign. But when it was observed that the new minister of State, Mora's successor and bitter enemy, sitting on the government benches, seemed overjoyed at the rebuke administered to a creature of the defunct statesman, and smiled complacently at Le Merquier's stinging persiflage, all embarrassment instantly disappeared and the ministerial smile, repeated on three hundred mouths, soon increased to scarce-restrained laughter, the laughter of crowds dominated by any rod, by whomsoever held, which the slightest sign of approbation from the master causes to burst forth. In the galleries, which were as a general rule but little indulged with picturesque incidents, and were entertained by these stories of bandits as by a genuine novel, there was general gayety, a radiant animation en-

livened the faces of all the women, overjoyed to be able to appear pretty without jarring upon the solemnity of the place. Little light hats quivered in all their bright-hued plumes, round arms encircled with gold leaned on the rail in order to listen more at their ease. The solemn Le Merquier had imparted to the sitting the entertainment of a play, had introduced the little comical note permitted at charitable concerts as a lure to the profane.

Impassive and cold as ice, despite his triumph, he continued to read in a voice as dismal and penetrating as a Lyonnais shower.

"Now, Messieurs, we ask ourselves how it was that a stranger, a Provençal recently returned from the Orient, entirely ignorant of the interests and needs of that island where he had never been seen before the elections, the true type of what the Corsicans contemptuously call 'a continental' — how did this man succeed in arousing such enthusiasm, devotion so great as to lead to crime, to profanation? His wealth will answer the question, his vile gold thrown into the faces of the electors, stuffed by force into their pockets with a shameless cynicism of which we have innumerable proofs." — Then came the endless series of affidavits: "I, the undersigned, Croce (Antoine), do testify, in the interest of truth, that Nardi, commissioner of police, came to our house one evening and said to me, 'Hark ye, Croce (Antoine), I swear to you by the flame of yonder lamp that, if you vote for Jansoulet, you shall have fifty francs to-morrow morning.'" —

And this: "I, the undersigned, Lavezzi (Jacques-Alphonse), declare that I refused with scorn seventeen francs offered me by the mayor of Pozzo-Negro to vote against my cousin Sébastiani." — It is probable that for three francs more Lavezzi (Jacques-Alphonse) would have devoured his scorn in silence. But the Chamber did not go so deep as that.

It was moved to indignation, was that incorruptible Chamber. It muttered, it moved about restlessly on its soft benches of red velvet, it uttered noisy exclamations. There were "Ohs!" of stupefaction, eyes like circumflex accents, sudden backward movements, or appalled, discouraged gestures, such as the spectacle of human degradation sometimes calls forth. And observe that the majority of those deputies had used the identical electoral methods, that there were on those benches heroes of the famous "rastels," of those open-air banquets at which begarlanded and beribboned calves were borne aloft in triumph as at Gargantua's kermesses. They naturally cried out louder than the others, turned in righteous wrath toward the high, solitary bench where the poor leper sat motionless, listening, his head in his hands. But amid the general hue and cry, a single voice arose in his favor, a low, unpractised voice, rather a sympathetic buzzing than speech, in which could be vaguely distinguished the words: "Great services rendered to Corsica. Extensive enterprises. *Caisse Territoriale.*"

The man who spoke thus falteringly was a little

fellow in white gaiters, with an albino's face and scanty hair that stood erect in bunches. But that tactless friend's interruption simply furnished Le Merquier with a pretext for an immediate and natural transition. A hideous smile parted his flabby lips. "The honorable Monsieur Sarigue refers to the *Caisse Territoriale;* we proceed to answer him." The Paganetti den of thieves seemed to be, in truth, very familiar to him. In a few concise, keen words he threw light into the inmost depths of that dark lair, pointed out all the snares, all the pitfalls, the windings, the trap-doors, like a guide waving his torch above the underground dungeons of some hideous *in pace.* He spoke of the pretended quarries, the railroads on paper, the imaginary steamboats, vanished in their own smoke. The ghastly desert of Taverna was not forgotten, nor the old Genoese tower that served as an office for the Maritime Agency. But the detail that rejoiced the heart of the Chamber above all else was the description of a burlesque ceremonial organized by the Governor for driving a tunnel through Monte-Rotondo, — a gigantic undertaking still in the air, postponed from year to year, requiring millions of money and thousands of arms, which had been inaugurated with great pomp a week before the election. The report described the affair comically, the blow of the pick delivered by the candidate on the flank of the great mountain covered with primeval forests, the prefect's speech, the blessing of the standards amid shouts of "Vive Bernard Jansoulet!" and two hundred workmen

going to work at once, working day and night for a week, and then — as soon as the election was over — abandoning the piles of broken rock heaped around an absurd excavation, an additional place of refuge for the redoubtable prowlers in the thickets. The trick was played. After extorting money so long from the shareholders, the *Caisse Territoriale* had been made to serve as a means of capturing the votes of the electors, — "And now, Messieurs, here is one last detail with which I might well have begun, in order to spare you the distressing story of this electoral burlesque. I learn that a judicial inquiry into the Corsican concern has been opened this very day, and that a searching expert examination of its books will very probably lead to one of those financial scandals, too frequent, alas! in our day, in which you will not, for the honor of this Chamber, permit one of your members to be involved."

Upon that unexpected disclosure the reporter paused a moment to draw breath, like an actor emphasizing the effect of his words; and in the dramatic silence which suddenly settled down upon the whole assemblage, the sound of a closing door was heard. It was Paganetti, the governor, who had hastily left his seat in one of the galleries, with pale face, round eyes, and mouth puckered for a whistle, like Mr. Punch when he has detected in the air the near approach of a violent blow. Monpavon, unmoved, puffed out his breastplate. The stout man wheezed violently into the flowers on his wife's little white hat.

Mère Jansoulet gazed at her son.

"I spoke of the honor of the Chamber, Messieurs, — I have something more to say on that subject."

Le Merquier was no longer reading. After the reporter, the orator came upon the stage, the judge rather. His face was devoid of expression, his glance averted, and nothing lived, nothing stirred in his long body, but the right arm, that long, bony arm in its short sleeve, which moved mechanically up and down like a sword of justice, and punctuated the end of each sentence with the cruel and inexorable gesture of beheading. And it was in truth a veritable execution at which that audience was looking on. The orator would have been glad to omit from consideration the scandalous legends, the mystery that hovered over the amassing of that colossal fortune in distant lands, far from all supervision. But there were in the candidate's life certain points difficult to explain, certain details — He hesitated, seemed to be selecting his words with great care, then, as if recognizing the impossibility of formulating the direct charge, he continued: "Let us not degrade the discussion, Messieurs. You have understood me, you know to what infamous reports, — to what calumnies I would that I might say, — I allude; but truth compels me to declare that when Monsieur Jansoulet, being summoned before our third committee, was called upon to controvert the charges made against him, his explanations were so vague that, while we were persuaded of his innocence, our scrupulous regard for your honor led us to

reject a candidate tainted with ordure of that sort. No, that man should not be allowed to sit among you. Indeed, what would he do here? Having resided so long in the Orient, he has forgotten the laws, the morals, the customs of his own country. He believes in the hasty administration of justice, bastinadoes in the public streets; he relies upon abuses of power, and, what is still worse, upon the venality, the cowering degradation of all mankind. He is the merchant who thinks that everything can be bought if he offers enough for it, — even the votes of electors, even the consciences of his colleagues."

You should have seen the artless admiration with which those estimable portly deputies, torpid with good living, listened to that ascetic, that man of another epoch, as if some Saint-Jérôme had come forth from the depths of his thebaid to overwhelm with his burning eloquence, in the Senate of the Empire of the East, the unblushing profligacy of prevaricators and extortioners. How fully they understood the noble sobriquet of "My Conscience," which the Palais de Justice bestowed upon him, and which suited him so well with his great height and his wooden gestures! In the galleries the enthusiasm was even greater. Pretty faces leaned forward to see him, to drink in his words. Murmurs of approval ran along the benches, waving bouquets of all shades of color, like the wind blowing through a field of grain in flower. A woman's voice exclaimed in a slight foreign accent: "Bravo! bravo!"

And the mother?

Standing motionless, absorbed by her eager desire to understand something of that court-room phraseology, of those mysterious allusions, she was like the deaf-mutes who detect what is said in their presence only by the movement of the lips, by the expression of the face. Now, one had only to look at her son and Le Merquier to understand what injury one was inflicting upon the other, what treacherous poisoned meaning fell from that long harangue upon the poor devil who might have been thought to be asleep, save for the quivering of his broad shoulders and the clenching of his hands in his hair, in which they rioted madly, while concealing his face. Oh! if she could have called to him from where she stood: "Don't be afraid, my son! If they all despise you, your mother loves you. Let us go away together. What do we care for them?" And for a moment she could almost believe that what she said to him thus in the depths of her heart reached him by virtue of some mysterious intuition. He had risen, shaken his curly head, with its flushed cheeks, and its thick lips quivering nervously with a childish longing to burst into tears. But, instead of leaving his bench, he clung to it, his great hands crushing the wooden rail. The other had finished; now it was his turn to reply.

"Messieurs —" he said.

He stopped instantly, dismayed by the hoarse, horribly dull and vulgar sound of his voice, which

he heard for the first time in public. And in that pause, tormented by twitchings of the face, by fruitless efforts to find the intonation he sought, he must needs summon strength to make his defence. And if the poor man's agony was touching to behold, the old mother up yonder, leaning forward, breathing hard, moving her lips nervously as if to assist him to find his words, sent back to him a faithful imitation of his torture. Although he could not see her, having his face turned away from that gallery which he intentionally avoided, that maternal breath, the ardent magnetism of those black eyes gave him life at last, and the fetters suddenly dropped from his speech and his gestures.

"First of all, Messieurs, let me say that I do not come here to defend my election. If you believe that electoral morals have not always been the same in Corsica, that all the irregularities committed must be attributed to the corrupting influence of my money and not to the uncivilized and passionate nature of a people, reject me; it will be justice and I shall not murmur. But there is something else than my election involved in this matter; accusations have been made which attack my honor, which bring it directly in question, and to those alone I propose to reply." His voice gradually became stronger, still trembling and indistinct, but with now and then a thrilling note such as we sometimes hear in voices whose original harshness has undergone some changes. He sketched his life very rapidly, his early days, his

departure for the Orient. You would have said that it was one of the eighteenth century tales of barbarian pirates scouring the Latin seas, of beys and fearless Provençaux, dark as crickets, who always end by marrying some sultana and "taking the turban," according to the old Marseillais expression. "For my part," said the Nabob, with his ingenuous smile, "I had no need to take the turban to enrich myself, I contented myself with importing into that land of indolence and utter heedlessness the activity, the pliability of a Frenchman from the South, and I succeeded in a few years in making one of the fortunes that are made nowhere else except in those infernally hot countries where everything is huge, hurried, out of proportion, where flowers grow in a night, where a single tree produces a whole forest. The excuse for such fortunes lies in the use that is made of them, and I undertake to say that no favorite of destiny ever tried harder than I did to earn forgiveness for his wealth. I did not succeed." — No, indeed, he had not succeeded. From all the gold he had sown with such insane lavishness he had reaped naught but hatred and contempt. Hatred! Who else could boast of having stirred up so much of that as he, as a vessel stirs up the mud when its keel touches bottom? He was too rich; that took the place in him of all sorts of vices, of all sorts of crimes, and singled him out for anonymous acts of vengeance, for cruel and persistent animosities.

"Ah! Messieurs," cried the poor Nabob, rais-

ing his clenched fists, "I have known poverty, I have struggled with it hand to hand, and it is a terrible struggle, I give you my word. But to struggle against wealth, to defend one's happiness, one's honor, one's peace of mind, feebly protected by piles of gold pieces which topple over and crush one, is a far more ghastly, more heart-sickening task. Never, in the gloomiest of my days of destitution, did I suffer the torture, the agony, the sleeplessness with which fortune has overwhelmed me, this horrible fortune which I abhor and which suffocates me! I am known as the Nabob in Paris. Nabob is not the proper name for me, but Pariah, a social pariah stretching out his arms, wide open, to a society that will have none of him."

Printed upon paper these words may seem cold; but there, before the whole Chamber, that man's defence seemed to be instinct with an eloquent and imposing serenity, which aroused astonishment at first, coming from that clown, that upstart, unread, uneducated, with his Rhone boatman's voice and his street porter's bearing, and afterward moved his auditors strangely by its unrefined, uncivilized character, utterly at variance with all parliamentary traditions. Already tokens of approval had manifested themselves among the benches, accustomed to submit to the colorless, monotonous downpour of administrative language. But at that cry of frenzy and despair hurled at wealth by the unfortunate man whom it held in its toils, whom it drenched and drowned in its floods of gold, and

who struggled against it, calling for help from the depths of his Pactolus, the whole Chamber rose with fervent applause, with hands outstretched as if to give the unhappy Nabob those tokens of esteem which he seemed to covet so earnestly, and at the same time to save him from shipwreck. Jansoulet was conscious of it, and, warmed by that manifestation of sympathy, he continued, with head erect and assured glance:

"You have just been told, Messieurs, that I am not worthy to sit among you. And the man who told you that was the very last man from whom I should have expected it, for he alone knows the painful secret of my life; he alone was able to speak for me, to justify me and convince you. He did not choose to do it. Very good! I will make the attempt, whatever it may cost me. Outrageously calumniated as I have been before the whole country, I owe to myself, I owe to my children this public justification, and I have decided to make it."

With that he turned abruptly toward the gallery where he knew that the enemy was watching him, and stopped suddenly, horror-stricken. Directly in front of him, behind the baroness's pale, malicious little face, his mother, his mother whom he believed to be two hundred leagues away from the terrible storm, stood leaning against the wall, gazing at him, holding toward him her divine face streaming with tears, but proud and radiant none the less in her Bernard's great success. For it was a genuine success of sincere, eminently human

emotion, which a few words more would change into a triumph. — "Go on! Go on!" men shouted from all sides of the Chamber, to reassure him, to encourage him. But Jansoulet did not speak. And yet he had very little to say to justify himself: "Calumny wilfully confused two names. My name is Bernard Jansoulet. The other's name was Jansoulet Louis." Not another word.

But that was too much in his mother's presence, as she was still ignorant of her oldest son's dishonor. It was too much for the family respect and unity.

He fancied he could hear his old father's voice: "I am dying of shame, my son." — Would not she die of shame too, if he were to speak? He met his mother's smile with a sublime glance of renunciation; then he continued in a dull voice and with a gesture of discouragement:

"Excuse me, Messieurs, this explanation is decidedly beyond my strength. Order an investigation into my life, open to all and in the broad light of day, for any one can understand my every act. I swear to you that you will find nothing therein which should debar me from sitting among the representatives of my country."

The amazement, the disappointment at that surrender, which seemed to all the sudden downfall of great effrontery when brought to bay, were beyond all bounds. There was a moment of excitement on the benches, the confusion of a standing vote, which the Nabob watched listlessly in the uncertain light from the stained glass windows, as the

condemned man watches the surging crowd from the platform of the scaffold; then, after the suspense of a century which precedes a supreme moment, the president announced amid profound silence, in the simplest manner imaginable:

"Monsieur Bernard Jansoulet's election is declared void."

Never was a man's life cut short with less solemnity or pother.

Mère Jansoulet, up yonder in her gallery, understood nothing except that she could see gaps on the benches all around, — that people were getting up and going away. Soon no one remained with her save the fat man and the lady in the white hat, who were leaning over the rail and gazing curiously at Bernard, who seemed to be preparing to go, for he was very calmly packing thick bundles of papers into a great portfolio. His papers arranged, he rose and left his seat. — Ah! the lives of those who sit in high places sometimes have very cruel moments. Gravely, heavily, under the eyes of the whole Chamber, he must redescend the steps he had climbed at the price of so much toil and money, only to be hurled back to their foot by an inexorable fatality.

It was that for which the Hemerlingues were waiting, following with their eyes to its last stage that heartrending, humiliating exit which piles upon the back of the rejected one something of the shame and horror of an expulsion; then, as soon as the Nabob had disappeared, they looked at each other with a silent laugh and left the gal-

lery, the old woman not daring to ask them to enlighten her, being warned by her instinct of the bitter hostility of those two. Left alone, she gave all her attention to something else that was being read, convinced that her son's interests were still under discussion. There was talk of elections, of counting ballots, and the poor mother, leaning forward over the rail in her shabby cap, knitting her thick eyebrows, would have listened religiously to the report on the Sarigue election to the very end, had not the usher who had admitted her come to tell her that it was all over and that she had better go.

"Really? It's all over?" she said, rising as if with regret.

And she added, timidly, in a low tone:

"Did he — did he win?"

It was so ingenuous, so touching, that the usher had not the slightest inclination to laugh.

"Unfortunately no, Madame. Monsieur Jansoulet did not win. But why did he stop after he made such a good start? If it's true that he was never in Paris before and that another Jansoulet did all they accuse him of, why did n't he say so?"

The old mother turned very pale and clung to the stair-rail.

She had understood.

Bernard's sudden pause when he caught sight of her, the sacrifice he had offered her so simply with the eloquent glance of a murdered beast came to her mind; by the same blow the shame of the Elder, of the favorite child, was confounded with the other's downfall, a two-edged maternal sorrow,

which tore her heart whichever way she turned. Yes, yes, it was for her sake that he had forborne to speak. But she would not accept such a sacrifice. He must return at once and explain himself to the deputies.

"My son? where is my son?"

"Below, Madame, in his carriage. It was he who sent me to look for you."

She darted in front of the usher, walking rapidly, talking aloud, jostling against little black-faced, bearded men who were gesticulating in the corridors. After the Salle des Pas-Perdus, she passed through a great ante-chamber, circular in shape, where servants, drawn up respectfully in line, formed a living, bedizened dado on the high bare wall. From there she could see, through the glass doors, the iron gateway outside, the crowd, and among other waiting carriages the Nabob's. The peasant woman as she passed recognized her enormous neighbor of the gallery talking with the sallow man in spectacles who had declaimed against her son and was receiving all sorts of congratulations and warm grasps of the hand for his speech. Hearing the name of Jansoulet pronounced with an accompaniment of mocking, well-satisfied laughter, she slackened her long stride.

"At all events," said a young dandy with the face of a dissolute woman, "he did n't prove wherein our charges are false."

At that the old woman made a jagged hole through the group and exclaimed, taking her stand in front of Moëssard:

"What he did n't tell you I will tell you. I am his mother, and it 's my duty to speak."

She interrupted herself to seize Le Merquier's sleeve as he was slinking away.

"You, above all, you bad man, you are going to listen to me. What have you against my child? Don't you know who he is? Wait a moment and let me tell you."

She turned to the journalist:

"I had two sons, Monsieur — "

Moëssard was no longer there. She returned to Le Merquier:

"Two sons, Monsieur — "

Le Merquier had disappeared.

"Oh! listen to me, some one, I entreat you," said the poor mother, throwing her hands and her words about, to recall, to detain her auditors; but they all fled, melted away, disappeared, deputies, reporters, strange and mocking faces to whom she insisted upon telling her story by main force, heedless of the indifference which greeted her sorrows and her joys, her maternal pride and affection expressed in a jargon of her own. And while she rushed about and labored thus, intensely excited, her cap awry, at once grotesque and sublime like all children of nature in the drama of civilization, calling to witness to her son's uprightness and the injustice of men even the footmen whose contemptuous impassiveness was more cruel than all the rest, Jansoulet, who had come to look for her, being anxious at her non-appearance, suddenly stood beside her.

"Take my arm, mother. You must not stay here."

He spoke very loud, with a manner so composed and calm that all laughter ceased, and the old woman, suddenly quieted, supported by the firm pressure of that arm, clinging to which the last trembling of her indignation vanished, left the palace between two respectful lines of people. A sublime though rustic couple, the son's millions illumining the mother's peasantry like the relics of a saint enclosed in a golden shrine, they disappeared in the bright sunlight, in the splendor of the gorgeous carriage, brutal irony in presence of that sore distress, a striking example of the ghastly poverty of wealth.

They sat side by side on the back seat, for they dreaded to be seen, and at first they did not speak. But as soon as the carriage had started, as soon as they had left behind the sorrowful Calvary where his honor remained on the gibbet, Jansoulet, at the end of his strength, laid his head against his mother's shoulder, hid his face in a fold of the old green shawl, and there, shedding hot tears, his whole body shaken by sobs, the cry of his infancy came once more to his lips, his *patois* wail when he was a little child: "Mamma! mamma!"

XXII.

PARISIAN DRAMAS.

"Que l'heure est donc brève
Qu'on passe en aimant!
C'est moins qu'un moment,
Un peu plus qu'un rêve." [1]

IN the half-light of the great salon clad in its summer garb, filled with flowers, the plush furniture swathed in white covers, the chandeliers draped in gauze, the shades lowered and the windows open, Madame Jenkins sits at the piano, picking out the last production of the fashionable musician of the day; a few sonorous chords accompany the exquisite lines, a melancholy *Lied* in unequal measures, which seems to have been written for the serious sweetness of her voice and the anxious state of her mind.

"Le temps nous enlève,
Notre enchantement," [2]

sighs the poor woman, moved by the sound of her own lament; and while the notes fly away through

[1] "How swift flies the hour
We pass in love's pleasures!
'T is less than a moment,
Scarce more than a dream."

[2] "Time tears from our grasp
Our blissful enchantment."

the courtyard of the mansion, tranquil as usual, where the fountain is playing in the midst of a clump of rhododendrons, the singer interrupts herself, her hands prolonging the chord, her eyes fixed on the music, but her glance far, far away. The doctor is absent. The interests of his business and his health have banished him from Paris for a few days, and, as frequently happens in solitude, the fair Madame Jenkins' thoughts have assumed that serious cast, that analytical tendency which sometimes makes a brief separation fatal to the most united households. United they had not been for a long time. They met only at table, before the servants, hardly spoke to each other, unless he, the man of oleaginous manners, chose to indulge in some brutal, uncivil remark concerning her son, her years which were beginning to tell upon her at last, or a dress which was not becoming to her. Always gentle and serene, she forced back her tears, submitted to everything, pretended not to understand; not that she loved him still, after so much cruel and contemptuous treatment, but it was the old story, as Joe the coachman said, of "an old incubus who wants to be married." Heretofore a terrible obstacle, the life of the legitimate spouse, had prolonged a shameful situation. Now that the obstacle no longer existed, she wanted to put an end to the comedy, because of André, who might any day be forced to despise his mother, because of the world which they had been deceiving for ten years, so that she never went into society without a sinking at the heart, dreading the wel-

come that would be accorded her on the morrow of a disclosure. To her hints, her entreaties, Jenkins had replied at first with vague phrases, with grandiloquent gestures: "Do you doubt me? Is n't our engagement sacred?"

He also dwelt upon the difficulty of keeping secret a ceremony of such importance. Then he had taken refuge in malevolent silence, big with chilling anger and violent resolutions. The duke's death, the check thereby administered to his insane vanity, had dealt the last blow; for disaster, which often brings together hearts that are ripe for a mutual understanding, consummates and completes disunion. And that was a genuine disaster. The popularity of the Jenkins Pearls suddenly arrested, the very thorough exposure of the position of the foreign physician, the charlatan, by old Bouchereau in the journal of the Academy, caused the leaders of society to gaze at one another in alarm, even paler from terror than from the absorption of arsenic into their systems, and the Irishman had already felt the effect of those bewilderingly sudden changes of the wind which make Parisian infatuations so dangerous.

It was for that reason, doubtless, that Jenkins had deemed it advisable to disappear for some time, leaving Madame to continue to frequent the salons that were still open, in order to feel the pulse of public opinion and hold it in awe. It was a cruel task for the poor woman, who found everywhere something of the same cold, distant reception she had met with at Hemerlingue's.

But she did not complain, hoping in this way to earn her marriage, to knit between him and herself, as a last resort, the painful bond of pity, of trials undergone in common. And as she knew that she was always in demand in society because of her talent, because of the artistic entertainment she furnished at select parties, being always ready to lay her long gloves and her fan on the piano, as a prelude to some portion of her rich repertory, she labored constantly, passed her afternoons turning over new music, selecting by preference melancholy and complicated pieces, the modern music which is no longer content to be an art but is becoming a science, and is much better adapted to the demands of our nervous fancies, our anxieties, than to the demands of sentiment.

"C'est moins qu'un moment,
Un peu plus qu'un rêve.
Le temps nous enlève
Notre enchantement."

A flood of bright light suddenly burst into the salon with the maid, who brought her mistress a card: "Heurteux, *homme d'affaires.*"

The gentleman was waiting. He insisted on seeing Madame.

"Did you tell him that the doctor was away from home?"

She had told him; but it was Madame with whom he wished to speak.

"With me?"

With a feeling of uneasiness she scrutinized

that coarse, rough card, that unfamiliar, harsh name: "Heurteux." Who could he be?

"Very well; show him in."

Heurteux, *homme d'affaires*, coming from the bright sunlight into the semi-darkness of the salon, blinked uncertainly, tried to distinguish his surroundings. She, on the contrary, distinguished very clearly a stiff, wooden figure, grizzly whiskers, a protruding under-jaw, one of those brigands of the Law whom we meet in the outskirts of the Palais de Justice, and who seem to have been born fifty years old, with a bitter expression about the mouth, an envious manner, and morocco satchels under their arms. He sat down on the edge of the chair to which she waved him, turned his head to make sure that the servant had left the room, then opened his satchel with great deliberation, as if to look for a paper. Finding that he did not speak, she began in an impatient tone:

"I must inform you, Monsieur, that my husband is away and that I am not familiar with any of his business matters."

Unmoved, with his hand still fumbling among his documents, the man replied:

"I am quite well aware that Monsieur Jenkins is away, Madame —" he laid particular stress on the words "Monsieur Jenkins," — "especially as I come from him."

She stared at him in terror.

"From him?"

"Alas! yes, Madame. The doctor — as you are doubtless aware — is in a very embarrassed position

for the moment. Unfortunate operations on the Bourse, the downfall of a great financial institution in which he had funds invested, the heavy burden of the Work of Bethlehem now resting on him alone, all these disasters combined have compelled him to form an heroic resolution. He is selling his house, his horses, everything that he owns, and has given me a power of attorney to that end."

He had found at last what he was looking for, one of those stamped papers, riddled with memoranda and words erased and interlined, into which the unfeeling law sometimes crowds so much cowardice and falsehood. Madame Jenkins was on the point of saying: "But I was here. I would have done whatever he wished, carried out all his orders," when she suddenly realized, from the visitor's lack of constraint, his self-assured, almost insolent manner, that she too was involved in that general overturn, in that throwing overboard of the expensive house and useless chattels, and that her departure would be the signal for the sale.

She rose abruptly. The man, still seated, continued:

"What I still have to say, Madame," — Oh! she knew, she could have dictated what he still had to say — "is so painful, so delicate — Monsieur Jenkins is leaving Paris for a long time, and, fearing to expose you to the perils and hazards of the new life upon which he is entering, to take you away from a son of whom you are very fond, and in whose interest it will be better perhaps — "

She no longer heard or saw him, but, given over to

despair, to madness perhaps, while he lost himself in involved sentences, she listened to a voice within persistently singing the air which haunted her in that terrible crash, as the drowning man's eyes retain the image of the last object upon which they rested.

"Le temps nous enlève
Notre enchantement."

Suddenly her pride returned to her.

"Let us put an end to this, Monsieur. All your circumlocution and your fine words are simply an additional insult. The truth is that I am to be driven out, turned into the street like a servant."

"O Madame! Madame! The situation is painful enough, let us not embitter it by words. In working out his *modus vivendi*, Monsieur Jenkins parts from you, but he does it with death in his heart, and the propositions I am instructed to make to you are a sufficient proof of his feeling for you. In the first place, as to furniture and clothes, I am authorized to allow you to take —"

"Enough," said she.

She rushed to the bell:

"I am going out. My hat, my cloak at once, — something, no matter what. I am in a hurry."

And while her servant went to bring what she required, she added:

"Everything here belongs to Monsieur Jenkins. Let him dispose of it as he will. I will take nothing from him — do not insist — it is useless."

The man did not insist. His errand being performed, the rest was of little consequence to him.

Coolly, without excitement, she carefully adjusted her hat in front of the mirror, the servant attaching the veil and arranging the folds of the cape over her shoulders; then she looked around for a moment to see if she had forgotten anything that was of value to her. No, nothing; her son's letters were in her pocket; she never parted from them.

"Does Madame wish the carriage?"

"No."

And she left the house.

It was about five o'clock. At that moment Bernard Jansoulet was passing through the iron gateway of the Corps Législatif, his mother on his arm; but, painful as was the drama that was being enacted there, this one far surpassed it in that respect, being more sudden, more unforeseen, devoid of the slightest solemnity, one of the private domestic dramas which Paris improvises every hour in the day; and it may be that that gives to the air we breathe in Paris that vibrating, quivering quality which excites the nerves. The weather was superb. The streets in those wealthy quarters, as broad and straight as avenues, shone resplendent in the light, which was already beginning to fade, enlivened by open windows, by flower-laden balconies, by glimpses of verdure toward the boulevards, light and tremulous between the harsh, rigid lines of stone. Madame Jenkins' hurried steps were bent in that direction, as she hastened along at random in a pitiable state of bewilderment. What a horrible downfall! Five minutes ago, rich, en-

compassed by all the respect and comforts of a luxurious existence. Now, nothing! Not even a roof to shelter her, not even a name! The street.

Where was she to go? What would become of her?

At first she had thought of her son. But to confess her sin, to blush before the child who respected her, to weep before him while depriving herself of the right to be consoled, was beyond her strength. No, there was nothing left for her but death. To die as soon as possible, to avoid shame by disappearing utterly, the inevitable end of situations from which there is no escape. But where to die? And how? There were so many ways of turning one's back on life! And as she walked along she reviewed them all in her mind. All around her was overflowing life, the charm that Paris lacks in winter, the open-air display of its splendor, its refined elegance, visible at that hour of the day and that season of the year around the Madeleine and its flower-market, in a space marked off by the fragrance of the roses and carnations. On the broad sidewalk, where gorgeous toilets were displayed, blending their rustling with the cool quivering of the leaves, there was something of the pleasure of a meeting in a salon, an air of acquaintance among the promenaders, smiles and quiet greetings as they passed. And suddenly Madame Jenkins, anxious concerning the distress depicted on her features, and concerning what people might think to see her hurrying along with that heedless, preoccupied manner, slackened her

pace to the saunter of a simple promenader, and stopped to look at the shop windows. The bright-colored, gauzy window displays all spoke of travelling, of the country: light trains for the fine gravel of the park, hats wrapped about with gauze as a protection against the sun at the seashore, fans, umbrellas, purses. Her eyes gazed at all those gewgaws without seeing them; but an indistinct, pale reflection in the clear glass showed her her own body lying motionless on a bed in a furnished lodging, the leaden sleep of a narcotic in her head, or outside the walls yonder, displacing the mud beneath some boat. Which was the better?

She hesitated, comparing the two; then, having formed her decision, walked rapidly away with the resolute stride of the woman who tears herself regretfully from the artful temptations of the shop-window. As she hurried along, the Marquis de Monpavon, vivacious and superb, with a flower in his buttonhole, saluted her at a distance with the grand flourish of the hat so dear to the vanity of woman, the acme of elegance in the way of street salutations, the hat raised high in air above a rigid head. She answered with the polite greeting of the true Parisian, hardly expressed by an imperceptible movement of the figure and a smile in the eyes; and, seeing that exchange of worldly courtesies amid the springtime merrymaking, no one would have suspected that the same sinister thought guided the footsteps of those two, who met by chance on the road they were both following, in opposite directions, but aiming for the same goal.

The prediction of Mora's valet with regard to the marquis was fulfilled: "We may die or lose our power, then you will be called to account and it will be a terrible time." It was a terrible time. With the utmost difficulty the ex-receiver-general had obtained an extension of a fortnight in which to reimburse the Treasury, clinging to one last chance, that Jansoulet's election would be confirmed, and that, having recovered his millions, he would come once more to his assistance. The decision of the Chamber had deprived him of that supreme hope. As soon as he heard of it, he returned very calmly to the club and went up to his room where Francis was impatiently waiting to hand him an important paper that had arrived during the day. It was a notice to Sieur Louis-Marie-Agénor de Monpavon to appear the next day at the office of the examining magistrate. Was that addressed to the director of the *Caisse Territoriale* or to the defaulting ex-receiver-general? In any event, the employment at the outset of the brutal method of formal summons, instead of a quiet notification, was sufficiently indicative of the seriousness of the affair and the firm determination of the authorities.

In the face of such an extremity, which he had long foreseen and expected, the old beau's course was determined in advance. A Monpavon in the police-court, a Monpavon librarian at Mazas! Never! He put all his affairs in order, destroyed papers, carefully emptied his pockets, in which he placed only a few ingredients taken from his toilet-table, and all in such a perfectly calm and

natural way that when he said to Francis as he left the room: "Going to take a bath. Beastly Chamber. Poisonous dirt," the servant believed what he said. Indeed, the marquis did not lie. After standing through that long and exciting sitting of the Chamber in the dust of the gallery, his legs ached as if he had spent two nights in a railway carriage; and as his resolve to die blended with his longing for a good bath, it occurred to the old sybarite to go to sleep in a bath-tub like What's-his-name — Thingamy — ps — ps — ps — and other famous characters of antiquity. It is doing him no more than justice to say that not one of those Stoics went forth to meet death more tranquilly than he.

Adorned with a white camellia with which, as he passed, the pretty flower-girl at the club decorated the button-hole above his rosette as an officer of the Legion of Honor, he was walking lightly up Boulevard des Capucines, when the sight of Madame Jenkins disturbed his serenity for a moment. He noticed a youthful air about her, a flame in her eyes, a something so alluring that he stopped to look at her. Tall and lovely, her long black gauze dress trailing behind, her shoulders covered by a lace mantle over which a garland of autumn leaves fell from her hat, she passed on, disappeared amid the throng of other women no less stylish than she, in a perfumed atmosphere; and the thought that his eyes were about to close forever on that attractive spectacle, which he enjoyed as a connoisseur, saddened the old beau a little and diminished the elasticity of his walk.

But a few steps farther on a meeting of another sort restored all his courage.

A shabby, shamefaced man, dazzled by the bright light, was crossing the boulevard; it was old Marestang, ex-senator, ex-minister, who was so deeply compromised in the affair of the *Tourteaux de Malte*, that, notwithstanding his age, his services, and the great scandal of such a prosecution, he had been sentenced to two years' imprisonment and stricken from the rolls of the Legion of Honor, where he was numbered among the great dignitaries. The affair was already ancient history, and the poor devil, a portion of his sentence having been remitted, had just come from prison, dejected, ruined, lacking even the wherewithal to gild his mental distress, for he had been compelled to disgorge. Standing on the edge of the sidewalk, he waited, hanging his head, until there should be an opportunity to cross the crowded street, sorely embarrassed by that enforced halt on the most frequented corner of the boulevards, caught between the foot-passengers and the stream of open carriages filled with familiar faces. Monpavon, passing near him, surprised his restless, timid glance, imploring recognition and at the same time seeking to avoid it. The idea that he might some day be reduced to that degree of humiliation caused him to shudder with disgust. "Nonsense! As if it were possible!" And, drawing himself up, inflating his breastplate, he walked on, with a firmer and more determined stride than before.

Monsieur de Monpavon is walking to his death. He goes thither by the long line of the boulevards, all aflame in the direction of the Madeleine, treading once more the springy asphalt like any loiterer, his nose in the air, his hands behind his back. He has plenty of time, there is nothing to hurry him, — the hour for the rendezvous is within his control. At every step he smiles, wafts a patronizing little greeting with the ends of his fingers, or performs the great flourish of the hat of a moment ago. Everything charms him, fascinates him, from the rumbling of the watering-carts to the rattle of the blinds at the doors of cafés which overflow to the middle of the sidewalk. The approach of death gives him the acute faculties of a convalescent, sensitive to all the beauties, all the hidden poesy of a lovely hour in summer in the heart of Parisian life, — of a lovely hour which will be his last, and which he would like to prolong until night. That is the reason, doubtless, why he passes the sumptuous establishment where he usually takes his bath; nor does he pause at the Chinese Baths. He is too well known hereabout. All Paris would know what had happened the same evening. There would be a lot of ill-bred gossip in clubs and salons, much spiteful comment on his death; and the old fop, the man of breeding, wishes to spare himself that shame, to plunge and be swallowed up in the uncertainty and anonymity of suicide, like the soldiers who, on the day after a great battle, are reported neither as living, wounded or dead, but simply as missing. That is

why he had been careful to keep nothing upon him that might lead to his identification or furnish any precise information for the police reports, and why he seeks the distant, out-of-the-way quarters of the vast city, where the ghastly but comforting confusion of the common grave will protect him. Already the aspect of the boulevards has changed greatly. The crowd has become compact, more active and engrossed, the houses smaller and covered with business signs. When he has passed Portes Saint-Martin and Saint-Denis, through which the swarming overflow of the faubourgs streams at all hours of the day, the provincial character of the city becomes accentuated. The old beau no longer sees any one whom he knows and can boast of being a stranger to all.

The shopkeepers, who stare curiously at him, with his display of linen, his fine frockcoat, his erect figure, take him for some famous actor out for a little healthful exercise before the play, on the old boulevard, the scene of his earliest triumphs. The wind is cooler, the twilight darkens distant objects, and while the long street is still flooded with light in those portions through which he has passed, the light fades at every step. So it is with the past when its rays fall upon him who looks back and regrets. It seems to Monpavon that he is entering the darkness. He shivers a little, but does not lose courage, and walks on with head erect and unfaltering gait.

Monsieur de Monpavon is walking to his death. Now he enters the complicated labyrinth of noisy

streets where the rumble of the omnibuses blends with the thousand and one industries of the working quarters, where the hot smoke from the factories is mingled with the fever of a whole population struggling against hunger. The air quivers, the gutters smoke, the buildings tremble as the heavy drays pass and collide at the corners of the narrow streets. Suddenly the marquis stops; he has found what he wanted. Between a charcoal dealer's dark shop and an undertaker's establishment, where the spruce boards leaning against the wall cause him to shudder, is a porte-cochère surmounted by a sign, the word "BATHS" on a dull lantern. He enters and crosses a damp little garden where a fountain weeps in a basin of artificial rockwork. That is just the dismal retreat he has been seeking. Who will ever dream of thinking that the Marquis de Monpavon came to that place to cut his throat? The house is at the end of the garden, a low house with green shutters, a glass door, and the false villa-like air that they all have. He orders a bath, plenty of towels, walks along the narrow corridor, and while the bath is being prepared, listening to the running water behind him, he smokes his cigar at the window, gazes at the flower-garden with its spindling lilacs, and the high wall that incloses it.

Adjoining it is a great yard, the yard of a fire-engine house with a gymnasium, whose poles and swings and horizontal bars, seen indistinctly over the wall, have the look of gibbets. A bugle rings out in the yard, and that blast carries the marquis

back thirty years, reminds him of his campaigns in Algeria, the lofty ramparts of Constantine, Mora's arrival in the regiment, and duels, and select card-parties. Ah! how well life began! What a pity that those infernal cards — Ps—ps — ps — However, it 's worth something to have saved one's breeding.

"Monsieur," said the attendant, "your bath is ready."

At that moment Madame Jenkins, pale and gasping for breath, entered André's studio, drawn thither by an instinct stronger than her will, by the feeling that she must embrace her child before she died. And yet, when she opened the door — he had given her a duplicate key — it was a relief to her to see that he had not returned, that her excitement, increased by a long walk, an unusual experience in her luxurious life as a woman of wealth, would have time to subside. No one in the room. But on the table the little note that he always left when he went out, so that his mother, whose visits, because of Jenkins' tyranny, had become more and more infrequent and brief, might know where he was, and either wait for him or join him. Those two had not ceased to love each other dearly, profoundly, despite the cruel circumstances which compelled them to introduce into their relations as mother and son the precautions, the clandestine mystery of a different kind of love.

"I am at my rehearsal," said the little note today, "I shall return about seven."

That attention from her son, whom she had not been to see for three weeks, and who persisted in expecting her none the less, brought to the mother's eyes a flood of tears which blinded her. One would have said that she had entered a new world. It was so light, so peaceful, so high, that little room which caught the last gleam of daylight on its windows, which was all aflame with the last rays of the sun already sinking below the horizon, and which seemed, like all attic rooms, carved out of a piece of sky, with its bare walls, decorated only by a large portrait, her own; nothing but her own portrait smiling in the place of honor and another in a gilt frame on the table. Yes, in very truth, the humble little lodging, which was still so light when all Paris was becoming dark, produced a supernatural impression upon her, despite the poverty of its scanty furniture, scattered through two rooms, its common chintz coverings, and its mantel adorned with two great bunches of hyacinths, the flowers that are drawn through the streets by cartloads in the morning. What a lovely, brave, dignified life she might have led there with her André! And in a moment, with the rapidity of a dream, she placed her bed in one corner, her piano in another, saw herself giving lessons, taking charge of the house, to which she brought her share of enthusiasm and courageous cheerfulness. How could she have failed to understand that that should be the duty, the pride of her widowhood? What blindness, what shameful weakness!

A sad mistake, doubtless, but one for which much extenuation might have been found in her easily influenced, affectionate nature, in the adroitness and knavery of her accomplice, who talked constantly of marriage, concealing from her the fact that he was not free himself, and when at last he was obliged to confess, drawing such a picture of the unrelieved gloom of his life, of his despair, of his love, that the poor creature, already so seriously involved in the eyes of the world, incapable of one of those heroic efforts which place one above false situations, had yielded at last, had accepted that twofold existence, at once so brilliant and so wretched, resting everything upon a lie that had lasted ten years. Ten years of intoxicating triumphs and indescribable anxiety, ten years during which she had never sung without the fear of being betrayed between two measures, during which the slightest remark concerning irregular establishments wounded her like an allusion to her own case, during which the expression of her face had gradually assumed that air of gentle humility, of a culprit demanding pardon. Then the certainty of being abandoned at some time had ruined even those borrowed joys, had caused her luxurious surroundings to wither and fade; and what agony, what suffering she had silently undergone, what never-ending humiliations, down to the last and most horrible of all!

While she reviews her life thus sorrowfully in the cool evening air and the peaceful calm of the deserted house, ringing laughter, an outburst of

joyous youthful spirits ascends from the floor below; and remembering André's confidences, his last letter, in which he told her the great news, she tries to distinguish among those unfamiliar, youthful voices that of her daughter Élise, her son's fiancée, whom she does not know, whom she will never know. That thought, which completes the voluntary disherison of the mother, adds to the misery of her last moments and fills them with such a flood of remorse and regret that, notwithstanding her determination to be brave, she weeps and weeps.

The night falls gradually. Great streaks of shadow strike the sloping windows, while the sky, immeasurable in its depth, becomes colorless, seems to recede into the darkness. The roofs mass for the night as soldiers do for an attack. The clocks gravely tell each other the hour, while the swallows circle about in the neighborhood of a hidden nest and the wind makes its usual incursion among the ruins in the old lumber-yard. To-night it blows with a wailing noise like the sea, with a shudder of fog; it blows from the river as if to remind the wretched woman that that is where she must go. Oh! how she shivers in her lace mantle at the thought! Why did she come here to revive her taste for life, which would be impossible after the confession she would be forced to make? Swift footsteps shake the staircase, the door is thrown open; it is André. He is singing, he is happy, and in a great hurry, for he is expected to dine with the Joyeuses. A glimmer of

light, quick, so that the lover may beautify himself. But, as he scratches the match, he divines the presence of some one in the studio, a shadow moving among the motionless shadows.

"Who 's there?"

Something answers, something like a stifled laugh or a sob. He thinks it is his young neighbors, a scheme of the "children" to amuse themselves. He draws near. Two hands, two arms seize him, are wound about him.

"It is I."

And in a feverish voice, which talks hurriedly in self-defence, she tells him that she is about to start on a long journey, and that before starting —

"A journey. Where are you going, pray?"

"Oh! I don't know. We are going ever so far away, — to his own country on some business of his."

"What! you won't be here for my play? It 's to be given in three days. And then, right after it, my wedding. Nonsense! he can't prevent your being present at my wedding."

She excuses herself, invents reasons, but her burning hands, which her son holds in his, her unnatural voice, convince André that she is not telling the truth. He attempts to light the candles, but she prevents him.

"No, no, we don't need a light. It is better this way. Besides, I have so many preparations still to make; I must go."

They are both standing, ready for the parting; but André will not let her go until he has made

"He holds her, holds her fast."

Copyright 1895 by Little, Brown, & Co.

Goupil & Cie Paris

her confess what the matter is, what tragic anxiety causes the wrinkles on that lovely face, in which the eyes — is it an effect of the twilight? — gleam with fierce brilliancy.

"Nothing — no, nothing, I promise you. Only the thought that I cannot share in your joys, your triumphs. But you know that I love you, you do not doubt your mother, do you? I have never passed a day without thinking of you. Do you do as much; keep a place in your heart for me. And now kiss me, and let me go at once. I have delayed too long."

A moment more and she will not have strength to do what she still has to do. She rushes toward the door.

"I say no, you shall not go. I have a feeling that some extraordinary thing is taking place in your life that you don't wish to tell me. You are in great sorrow, I am sure of it. That man has done some shameful thing to you."

"No, no; let me go, let me go."

But on the contrary, he holds her, holds her fast.

"Come, what is the matter? Tell me, tell me —"

Then, under his breath, in a low, loving voice, like a kiss:

"He has left you, has he not?"

The unhappy creature shudders, struggles.

"Don't ask me any questions. I will not tell you anything. Adieu!"

And he rejoins, straining her to his heart:

"What can you tell me that I do not know already, my poor mother? Didn't you understand why I left his house six months ago?"

"You know?"

"Everything. And this that has happened to you to-day I have long foreseen and hoped for."

"Oh! wretched, wretched woman that I am, why did I come?"

"Because this is your proper place, because you owe me ten years of my mother. You see that I must keep you."

He says this kneeling in front of the couch upon which she has thrown herself in a flood of tears and with the last plaintive outcries of her wounded pride. For a long while she weeps thus, her son at her feet. And lo! the Joyeuses, anxious at André's non-appearance, come up in a body in search of him. There is a veritable invasion of innocent faces, waving curls, modest costumes, rippling gayety, and over the whole group shines the great lamp, the good old lamp with the huge shade, which M. Joyeuse solemnly holds aloft as high and as straight as he can, in the attitude of a *canephora*. They halt abruptly, dumbfounded, at sight of that pale, sad woman who gazes, deeply moved, at all those smiling, charming creatures, especially at Élise, who stands a little behind the others, and whose embarrassment in making that indiscreet visit stamps her as the *fiancée*.

"Élise, kiss our mother and thank her. She has come to live with her children."

Behold her entwined in all those caressing arms,

pressed to four little womanly hearts which have long lacked a mother's support, behold her made welcome with sweet cordiality in the circle of light cast by the family lamp, broadened a little so that she can find room there, can dry her eyes, obtain warmth and light for her heart at that sturdy flame which rises without a flicker, even in that little artist's studio under the roof, where the storm howled so fiercely just now, the terrible storm that must be at once forgotten.

The man who is breathing his last yonder, lying in a heap in the bloody bath-tub, has never known that sacred flame. Selfish and hard-hearted, he lived to the last for show, puffing out his superficial breastplate with a blast of vanity. And that vanity was the best that there was in him. It was that which kept him on his feet and jaunty and swaggering so long, that which clenched his teeth on the hiccoughs of his death agony. In the damp garden the fountain drips sadly. The firemen's bugle sounds the curfew. "Just go up to number 7," says the mistress of the establishment, "he's a long while over his bath." The attendant goes up and utters a shriek of horror: "O Madame, he's dead — but it is n't the same man." They run to the spot, and no one, in truth, can recognize the fine gentleman who entered just now in this lifeless doll, with its head hanging over the side of the bath-tub, the rouge mingling with the blood that moistens it, and every limb relaxed in utter weariness of the part played to the very end, until it killed the actor. Two slashes of the razor across

the magnificent, unwrinkled breastplate, and all his factitious majesty has burst like a bubble, has resolved itself into this nameless horror, this mass of mud and blood and ghastly, streaked flesh, wherein lies unrecognizable the model of good-breeding, Marquis Louis-Marie-Agénor de Monpavon.

XXIII.

MEMOIRS OF A CLERK.—LAST SHEETS.

I HERE set down, in haste and with an intensely agitated pen, the shocking events of which I have been the plaything for some days past. This time it is all up with the *Territoriale* and all my ambitious dreams. Protests, levies, police-raids, all our books in the custody of the examining magistrate, the Governor a fugitive, our director Bois-l'Héry at Mazas, our director Monpavon disappeared. My head is in a whirl with all these disasters. And to think that, if I had followed the warnings of sound common-sense, I should have been tranquilly settled at Montbars six months ago, cultivating my little vineyard, with no other preoccupation than watching the grapes grow round and turn to the color of gold in the pleasant Burgundian sunshine, and picking from the vines, after a shower, the little gray snails that make such an excellent fricassee. With the results of my economy I would have built, on the high land at the end of the vineyard, on a spot that I can see at this moment, a stone summer-house like M. Chalmette's, so convenient for an afternoon nap,

while the quail are singing all around among the vines. But no, constantly led astray by treacherous illusions, I longed to make a fortune, to speculate, to try banking operations on a grand scale, to tie my fortune to the chariot of the successful financiers of the day; and now here I am at the most melancholy stage of my history, clerk in a ruined counting-house, intrusted with the duty of answering a horde of creditors, of shareholders drunk with rage, who pour out the vilest insults upon my white hairs and would fain hold me responsible for the Nabob's ruin and the governor's flight. As if I were not as cruelly hit myself, with my four years' back pay which I lose once more, and my seven thousand francs of money advanced, all of which I intrusted to that villain, Paganetti of Porto-Vecchio.

But it was written that I should drink the cup of humiliation and mortification to the dregs. Was I not forced to appear before the examining magistrate, I, Passajon, formerly apparitor to the Faculty, with my record of thirty years of faithful service and the ribbon of an officer of the Academy! Oh! when I saw myself ascending that stairway at the Palais de Justice, so long and broad, with no rail to cling to, I felt my head going round and my legs giving way under me. That was when I had a chance to reflect, as I passed through those halls, black with lawyers and judges, with here and there a high green door, behind which I could hear the impressive sounds of courts in session; and up

above, in the corridor where the offices of the examining magistrates are, during the hour that I had to wait on a bench where I had prison vermin crawling up my legs, while I listened to a lot of thieves, pickpockets and girls in Saint-Lazare caps, talking and laughing with Gardes de Paris, and the ringing of the muskets on the floor of the corridors, and the dull rumbling of prison vans. I realized then the danger of *combinazioni*, and that it was not always well to laugh at M. Gogo.

One thing comforted me somewhat, however, and that was that, as I had never taken part in the deliberations of the *Territoriale*, I was in no way responsible for its transactions and swindles. But explain this. When I was in the magistrate's office, facing that man in a velvet cap who stared at me from the other side of the table with his little crooked eyes, I had such a feeling that I was being explored and searched and turned absolutely inside out that, in spite of my innocence, I longed to confess. To confess what? I have no idea. But that is the effect that justice produces. That devil of a man sat for five long minutes staring at me without speaking, turning over a package of papers covered with a coarse handwriting that seemed familiar to me, then said to me abruptly, in a tone that was at once cunning and stern:

"Well, Monsieur Passajon! How long is it since we played the drayman's trick?"

The memory of a certain little peccadillo, in

which I had taken part in days of distress, was so distant that at first I did not understand; but a few words from the magistrate proved to me that he was thoroughly posted as to the history of our bank. That terrible man knew everything, to the most trivial, the most secret details.

Who could have given him such accurate information?

And with it all he was very sharp, very abrupt, and when I attempted to guide the course of justice by some judicious observations, he had a certain insolent way of saying: "None of your fine phrases," which was the more wounding to me, at my age, with my reputation as a fine speaker, because we were not alone in his office. A clerk sat near me, writing down my deposition, and I could hear some one behind turning over the leaves of some great book. The magistrate asked me all sorts of questions about the Nabob, the time when he had made his contributions, where we kept our books, and all at once, addressing the person whom I did not see, he said:

"Show us the cash-book, Monsieur l'Expert."

A little man in a white cravat brought the great volume and placed it on the table. It was M. Joyeuse, formerly cashier for Hemerlingue and Son. But I had no time to present my respects to him.

"Who did that?" the magistrate asked me, opening the book at a place where a leaf had been torn out. "Come, do not lie about it."

I did not lie, for I had no idea, as I never

concerned myself about the books. However, I thought it my duty to mention M. de Géry, the Nabob's secretary, who used often to come to our offices at night and shut himself up alone in the counting-room for hours at a time. Thereupon little Père Joyeuse turned red with anger.

"What he says is absurd, Monsieur le Juge d'Instruction. Monsieur de Géry is the young man I mentioned to you. He went to the *Territoriale* solely for the purpose of keeping an eye on affairs there, and felt too deep an interest in poor Monsieur Jansoulet to destroy the receipts for his contributions, the proofs of his blind but absolute honesty. However, Monsieur de Géry, who has been detained a long while in Tunis, is now on his way home, and will soon be able to afford all necessary explanations."

I felt that my zeal was likely to compromise me.

"Be careful, Passajon," said the judge very sternly. "You are here only as a witness; but if you try to give the investigation a wrong turn you may return as a suspect."—Upon my word the monster seemed to desire it.—"Come, think, who tore out this page?"

Thereupon I very opportunely remembered that, a few days before leaving Paris, our Governor had told me to bring the books to his house, where they had remained until the following day. The clerk made a note of my declaration, whereupon the magistrate dismissed me with a wave of the hand, warning me that I must hold myself at his disposal. When I was at the door he recalled me:

"Here, Monsieur Passajon, take this; I have no further use for it."

He handed me the papers he had been consulting while he questioned me; and my confusion can be imagined when I saw on the cover the word "*Memoirs*" written in my roundest hand. I had myself furnished justice with weapons, with valuable information which the suddenness of our catastrophe had prevented me from rescuing from the general cleaning out executed by the police in our offices.

My first impulse, on returning, was to tear these tale-bearing sheets in pieces; then, after reflection, having satisfied myself that there was nothing in these *Memoirs* to compromise me, I decided, instead of destroying them, to continue them, with the certainty of making something out of them some day or other. There is no lack in Paris of novelists without imagination, who have not the art of introducing anything but true stories in their books, and who will not be sorry to buy a little volume of facts. That will be my way of revenging myself on this crew of high-toned pirates with whom I have become involved, to my shame and to my undoing.

It was necessary, however, for me to find some way of occupying my leisure time. Nothing to do at the office, which has been utterly deserted since the legal investigation began, except to pile up summonses of all colors. I have renewed my former practice of writing for the cook on the second floor, Mademoiselle Séraphine, from whom

I accept some trifling supplies which I keep in the safe, once more a pantry. The Governor's wife also is very kind to me and stuffs my pockets whenever I go to see her in her fine apartments in the Chaussée d'Antin. Nothing is changed there. The same magnificence, the same comfort; furthermore, a little baby three months old, the seventh, and a superb nurse, whose Normandy cap creates a sensation when they drive in the Bois de Boulogne. I suppose that when people are once fairly started on the railway of fortune they require a certain time to slacken their speed or come to a full stop. And then, too, that thief of a Paganetti, to guard against accidents, had put everything in his wife's name. Perhaps that is why that jabbering Italian has taken a vow of affection for him which nothing can weaken. He is a fugitive, he is in hiding; but she is fully convinced that her husband is a little St. John in guilelessness, a victim of his kindness of heart and credulity. You should hear her talk: "You know him, Moussiou Passajon. You know whether he is *e*scrupulous. Why, as true as there 's a God, if my husband had done the dishonest things they accuse him of, I myself — do you hear me — I myself would have put a gun in his hands, and I would have said: 'Here, Tchecco, blow your head off!'" And the way she opens the nostrils in her little turned-up nose, and her round black eyes, like two balls of jet, makes you feel that that little Corsican from Île Rousse would have done as she says. I tell you that damned Governor must be

a shrewd fellow to deceive even his wife, to act a part in his own house, where the cleverest let themselves be seen as they are.

Meanwhile all these people are living well; Bois-l'Héry at Mazas has his meals sent from the Café Anglais, and Uncle Passajon is reduced to living on odds and ends picked up in kitchens. However, we must not complain too much. There are those who are more unfortunate than we, M. Francis, for instance, whom I saw at the *Territoriale* this morning, pale and thin, with disgraceful linen and ragged cuffs, which he continues to pull down as a matter of habit.

I was just in the act of broiling a bit of bacon in front of the fire in the directors' room, my cover being laid on the corner of a marquetry table with a newspaper underneath in order not to soil it. I invited Monpavon's valet to share my frugal repast; but, because he has waited on a marquis, that fellow fancies that he 's one of the nobility, and he thanked me with a dignified air, which made me want to laugh when I looked at his hollow cheeks. He began by telling me that he was still without news of his master, that they had sent him away from the club on Rue Royale where all the papers were under seal and crowds of creditors swooping down like flocks of swallows on the marquis's trifling effects. "So that I find myself a little short," added M. Francis. That meant that he had not a sou in his pocket, that he had slept two nights on the benches along the boulevards, waked every minute by policemen,

compelled to get up, to feign drunkenness in order to obtain another shelter. As for eating, I believe that he had not done that for a long while, for he stared at the food with hungry eyes that made one's heart ache, and when I had forcibly placed a slice of bacon and a glass of wine in front of him, he fell on them like a wolf. The blood instantly came to his cheeks, and as he ate he began to chatter and chatter.

"Do you know, Père Passajon," he said between two mouthfuls, "I know where he is — I 've seen him."

He winked slyly. For my part, I stared at him in amazement.

"In God's name, what have you seen, Monsieur Francis?"

"The marquis, my master — yonder in the little white house behind Notre Dame." He did not say the morgue, because that is a too vulgar word. "I was very sure I should find him there. I went straight there the next day. And there he was. Oh! very well hidden, I promise you. No one but his valet de chambre could have recognized him. His hair all gray, his teeth gone, and his real wrinkles, his sixty-five years that he used to fix up so well. As he lay there on that marble slab with the faucet dripping on him, I fancied I saw him at his dressing table."

"And you said nothing?"

"No, I had known his intentions on that subject for a long while. I let him go out of the world quietly, in the English fashion, as he wanted

to do. All the same, he might have given me a bit of bread before he went, when I had been in his service twenty years."

Suddenly he brought his fist down upon the table in a rage:

"When I think that, if I had chosen, I might have entered Mora's service instead of Monpavon's, that I might have had Louis's place! There was a lucky dog! Think of the rolls of a thousand he nabbed at his duke's death! — And the clothes the duke left, shirts by the hundred, a dressing-gown in blue fox-skin worth more than twenty thousand francs! And there 's that Noël, he must have lined his pockets! Simply by making haste, *parbleu!* for he knew it could n't last long. And there 's nothing to be picked up on Place Vendôme now. An old gendarme of a mother who manages everything. They 're selling Saint-Romans, they 're selling the pictures. Half of the house is to let. It 's the end of everything."

I confess that I could not help showing my satisfaction; for, after all, that wretched Jansoulet is the cause of all our misfortunes. A man who boasted of being so rich and talked about it everywhere. The public was taken in by it, like the fish that sees scales shining in a net. He has lost millions, I grant you; but why did he let people think he had plenty more? They have arrested Bois-l'Héry, but he 's the one they should have arrested. — Ah! if we had had another expert, I am sure it would have been done long ago. — Indeed, as I said to Francis, one has only to look

at that parvenu of a Jansoulet to see what he amounts to. Such a face, like a high and mighty brigand!

"And so common," added the former valet.

"Not the slightest moral character."

"Utter lack of breeding.—However, he's under water, and Jenkins too, and many others with them."

"What! the doctor too? That's too bad. Such a polite, pleasant man!"

"Yes, there's another man that's being sold out. Horses, carriages, furniture. The courtyard at his house is full of placards and sounds empty as if death had passed that way. The château at Nanterre's for sale. There were half a dozen 'little Bethlehems' left, and they packed them off in a cab. It's the crash, I tell you, Père Passajon, a crash that we may not see the end of, perhaps, because we're both old, but it will be complete. Everything's rotten; everything must burst!"

It was horrible to see that old flunkey of the Empire, gaunt and stooping, covered with filth and crying like Jeremiah: "This is the end," with his toothless mouth wide open like a great black hole. I was afraid and ashamed before him, I longed to see his back; and I thought to myself: "O Monsieur Chalmette! O my little vineyard at Montbars!"

Same date.

Great news! Madame Paganetti came this afternoon mysteriously and brought me a letter from the Governor. He is in London, just about

to start a magnificent enterprise. Splendid offices in the finest part of the city; a stock company with superb prospects. He requests me to join him there, "happy," he says, "to repair in that way the wrong that has been done me." I shall have twice the salary I had at the *Territoriale*, with lodgings and fuel thrown in, five shares in the new company, and all my back pay in full. Only a trifling advance to be made for travelling expenses and some few importunate debts in the quarter. *Vive la joie!* my fortune is assured. I must write to the notary at Montbars to raise some money on my vineyard.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT BORDIGHERA.

As M. Joyeuse had informed the examining magistrate, Paul de Géry was on his way home from Tunis after an absence of three weeks. Three interminable weeks, passed in struggling amid a network of intrigues, of plots cunningly devised by the powerful enmity of the Hemerlingues, wandering from office to office, from department to department, through that vast *résidence* on the Bardo, where all the different departments of the State are collected in the same frowning enclosure, bristling with culverins, under the immediate supervision of the master, like his stables and his harem. Immediately on his arrival Paul had learned that the Chamber of Justice was beginning to hear the Jansoulet case in secret, — a mockery of a trial, lost beforehand; and the Nabob's closed counting-rooms on the Marine Quay, the seals placed upon his cash boxes, his vessels lying at anchor in the harbor of Goletta, the guard of *chaouchs* around his palaces, already denoted a species of civil death, an intestacy as to which there would soon be nothing left to do but divide the spoils.

Not a champion, not a friend in that greedy pack; even the Frankish colony seemed not displeased at the downfall of a courtier who had so long obstructed all the roads to favor by occupying them himself. It was absolutely hopeless to think of rescuing that victim from the bey's clutches in the absence of a signal triumph in the Chamber of Deputies. All that de Géry could hope to do was to save a few spars from the wreck, and even that required haste, for he expected from day to day to be advised of his friend's complete discomfiture.

He took the field, therefore, and went about his operations with an activity which nothing could abate, neither Oriental cajolery, that refined honey-sweet courtesy beneath which lurk savage ferocity and dissolute morals, nor the hypocritically indifferent smiles, nor the demure airs, the folded arms which invoke divine fatalism when human falsehood fails of its object. The *sang-froid* of that cool-headed little Southerner, in whom all the exuberant qualities of his countrymen were condensed, stood him in at least as good stead as his perfect familiarity with the French law, of which the Code of Tunis is simply a disfigured copy.

By adroit manœuvring and circumspection, and in spite of the intrigues of Hemerlingue *fils*, who had great influence at the Bardo, he succeeded in exempting from confiscation the money loaned by the Nabob a few months before, and in extorting ten millions out of fifteen from the rapacious Mohammed. On the morning of the very day

when that sum was to be paid over to him he received a despatch from Paris announcing that the election was annulled. He hurried at once to the palace, desirous to reach there in advance of the news; and on his return, with his ten millions in drafts on Marseille safely bestowed in his pocket-book, he passed Hemerlingue's carriage on the road, its three mules tearing along at full speed. The gaunt, owl-like face was radiant. As de Géry realized that if he remained only a few hours longer at Tunis his drafts would be in great danger of being confiscated, he engaged his passage on an Italian packet that was to sail for Genoa the next day and passed the night on board, and his mind was not at rest until he saw the white terraces of Tunis at the upper end of its bay, and the cliffs of Cape Carthage fading from sight behind him. When they entered the harbor of Genoa, the packet, as it ran alongside the wharf, passed close to a large yacht flying the Tunisian flag among a number of small flags with which she was decorated. De Géry was greatly excited, thinking for a moment that he was pursued and that on going ashore he might have a scuffle with the Italian police like a common pickpocket. But no, the yacht was lying quietly at anchor, her crew were scrubbing the deck and repainting the red mermaid that formed her figurehead as if some personage of importance were expected on board. Paul had no curiosity to ascertain who that personage might be; he simply rode across the marble city and returned by the railway which runs from Genoa to Marseille, follow-

ing the coast; a marvellous road, where you pass from the inky darkness of tunnels into the dazzling splendor of the blue sea, but so narrow that accidents are very frequent.

At Savona the train stopped and the passengers were told that they could go no farther, as one of the small bridges across the streams that rush down from the mountain into the sea had broken down during the night. They must wait for the engineer and workmen who had been summoned by telegraph, stay there half a day perhaps. It was early morning. The Italian town was just awaking in one of those hazy dawns which promise extreme heat during the day. While the passengers scattered, seeking refuge in hotels or restaurants, or wandering about the town, de Géry, distressed by the delay, tried to find some way of avoiding the loss of ten hours or more. He thought of poor Jansoulet, whose honor and whose life might perhaps be saved by the money he was bringing, of his dear Aline, the thought of whom had not left him once during his journey, any more than the portrait she had given him. Suddenly it occurred to him to hire one of the *calesinos*, four-horse vehicles which make the journey from Genoa to Nice along the Italian Corniche, a fascinating drive often taken by foreigners, lovers, and gamblers who have been lucky at Monaco. The driver agreed to be at Nice early; but even though he should reach there no sooner than by waiting for the train, the impatient traveller felt an immense longing to be relieved of the necessity of pacing

the streets, to know that the space between him and his desire decreased with every revolution of the wheels.

Ah! on a lovely June morning, at our friend Paul's age and with one's heart overflowing with love as his was, to fly along the white Corniche road behind four horses, is to feel an intoxication of travel that words cannot describe. On the left, at a depth of a hundred feet, lies the sea flecked with foam, from the little round bays along the shore to the hazy horizon where the blue of the sea and the blue of the sky melt together; red or white sails, like birds with a single wing spread to the breeze, the slender silhouettes of steamers with a little smoke trailing behind like a farewell, and along the beaches, of which you catch glimpses as the road winds, fishermen no larger than sea-mews in their boats, lying at anchor, which look like nests. Then the road descends, follows a rapid downward slope along the base of cliffs and head-lands almost perpendicular. The cool breeze from the water reaches you there, blends with the thou-sand little bells on the harnesses, while at the right, on the mountain-side, the pines and green oaks rise tier above tier, with gnarled roots protruding from the sterile soil, and cultivated olive-trees in terraces, as far as a broad ravine, white and rocky, bordered with green plants which tell of the passage of the waters, the dry bed of a torrent up which toil laden mules, sure of their footing among the loose shingle, where a washerwoman stoops beside a microscopic pool, a few drops remaining from the

great winter freshets. From time to time you rumble through the one street of a village, or rather of a small town of historic antiquity, grown rusty with too much sunshine, the houses crowded closely together and connected by dark archways, a network of covered lanes which climb the sheer cliff with snatches of light from above, openings like the mouths of mines affording glimpses of broods of children with curly hair like a halo about their heads, baskets of luscious fruit, a woman descending the rough pavements with a pitcher on her head or a distaff in her hand. Then, at a corner of the street, the blue twinkling of the waves, immensity once more.

But as the day wore on, the sun, mounting higher in the heavens, scattered its beams over the sea just emerging from its mists, heavy with sleep, dazed, motionless, with a quartz-like transparence, and myriads of rays fell upon the water as if arrow-points had pricked it, making a dazzling reflection, doubled in intensity by the whiteness of the cliffs and the soil, by a veritable African sirocco which raised the dust in a spiral column as the carriage passed. They reached the hottest, the most sheltered portions of the Corniche, — a genuinely tropical temperature, where dates, cactus, the aloe, with its tall, candelabra-like branches, grow in the fields. When he saw those slender trunks, that fantastic vegetation shooting up in the white, hot air, when he felt the blinding dust crunching under the wheels like snow, de Géry, his eyes partly closed, half-dreaming in that leaden

noon-day heat, fancied that he was making once more the tiresome journey from Tunis to the Bardo, which he had made so often in a strange medley of Levantine chariots, brilliant liveries, *meahris* with long neck and hanging lip, gayly-caparisoned mules, young asses, Arabs in rags, half-naked negroes, great functionaries in full dress, with their escorts of honor. Should he find yonder, where the road skirts gardens of palm-trees, the curious, colossal architecture of the bey's palace, its close-meshed window gratings, its marble doors, its *moucharabies* cut out of wood and painted in vivid colors? It was not the Bardo, but the pretty village of Bordighera, divided like all those on the coast into two parts, the *Marine* lying along the shore, and the upper town, connected by a forest of statuesque palms with slender stalks and drooping tops, — veritable rockets of verdure, showing stripes of blue through their innumerable regular clefts.

The unendurable heat and the exhaustion of the horses compelled the traveller to halt for two or three hours at one of the great hotels that line the road and, from early in November, bring to that wonderfully sheltered little village all the luxurious life and animation of an aristocratic winter resort. But at that time of year the *Marine* of Bordighera was deserted, save for a few fishermen, who were invisible at that hour. The villas and hotels seemed dead, all their blinds and shades being closely drawn. The new arrival was led through long, cool, silent passages, to a large salon facing

north, evidently a part of one of the full suites which are generally let for the season, as it was connected with other rooms on either side by light doors. White curtains, a carpet, the semi-comfort demanded by the English even when travelling, and in front of the windows, which the innkeeper threw wide open as a lure to the visitor, to induce him to make a more extended halt, the magnificent view of the mountain. An astonishing calm reigned in that huge, deserted inn, with no steward, no cook, no attendants, — none of the staff arrived until the first cool days, — and given over to the care of a native spoil-sauce, an expert in *stoffatos* and *risottos*, and to two stable-boys, who donned the regulation black coat, white cravat and pumps at meal hours. Luckily, de Géry proposed to remain there only an hour or two, — long enough to breathe, to rest his eyes from the glare of burnished silver and to free his heavy head from the helmet with the painful chin-strap that the sun had placed upon it.

From the couch on which he lay, the beautiful landscape, terraces of light, quivering olive-trees, orange-groves of darker hue, their leaves gleaming as if wet in the moving rays, seemed to come down to his window in tiers of verdure of different shades, amid which the scattered villas stood forth in dazzling whiteness, among them Maurice Trott, the banker's, recognizable by the capricious richness of its architecture and the height of its palm-trees. The Levantine's palace, whose gardens extended to the very windows of the hotel, had

sheltered for several months past an artistic celebrity, the sculptor Bréhat, who was dying of consumption and owed the prolongation of his life to that princely hospitality. This proximity of a famous moribund, of which the landlord was very proud and which he would have been glad to charge in his bill, — the name of Bréhat, which de Géry had so often heard mentioned with admiration in Felicia Ruys' studio, led his thoughts back to the lovely face with the pure outlines, which he had seen for the last time in the Bois de Boulogne, leaning upon Mora's shoulder. What had become of the unfortunate girl when that support had failed her? Would the lesson profit her in the future? And, by a strange coincidence, while he was thinking thus of Felicia, a great white greyhound went frisking along a tree-lined avenue in the sloping garden before him. One would have said that it was Kadour himself, — the same short hair, the same fierce, slender red jaws. Paul, at his open window, was assailed in an instant by all sorts of visions, sweet and depressing. Perhaps the superb scenery before him, the lofty mountain up which a blue shadow was running, tarrying in all the inequalities of the ground, assisted the vagabondage of his thought. Under the orange and lemon trees, set out in straight lines for cultivation, stretched vast fields of violets in close, regular clusters, traversed by little irrigating canals, whose walls of white stone made sharp breaks in the luxuriant verdure.

An exquisite odor arose, of violets fermented in

the sun, a hot boudoir perfume, enervating, weakening, which called up before de Géry's eyes feminine visions, Aline, Felicia, gliding across the enchanted landscape, in that blue-tinted atmosphere, that elysian light which seemed to be the visible perfume of such a multitude of flowers in full bloom. A sound of doors closing made him open his eyes. Some one had entered the adjoining room. He heard a dress brushing against the thin partition, the turning of leaves in a book in which the reader seemed to feel no absorbing interest; for he was startled by a long sigh ending in a yawn. Was he still asleep, still dreaming? Had he not heard the cry of the "jackal in the desert," so thoroughly in harmony with the heavy, scorching temperature without? No. Nothing more. He dozed again; and this time all the confused images that haunted him took definite shape in a dream, a very lovely dream.

He was taking his wedding journey with Aline. A fascinating bride she was. Bright eyes, overflowing with love and faith, which knew only him, looked at none but him. In that same hotel parlor, on the other side of the centre table, the sweet girl was sitting in a white *négligé* morning costume which smelt of violets and of the dainty lace of the trousseau. One of those wedding-journey breakfasts, served immediately after rising, in sight of the blue sea and the clear sky which tinge with azure the glass from which you drink, the eyes into which you gaze, the future, life and the vast expanse of space. Oh! what superb weather,

what a divine, youth-renewing light, and how happy they were!

And suddenly, amid their kisses, their intoxicating bliss, Aline became sad. Her lovely eyes were dimmed with tears. "Felicia is there," she said, "you will not love me any more." And he laughed at her: "Felicia, — here? What an idea!" "Yes, yes, she is there." Trembling, she pointed to the adjoining room, where he heard Felicia's voice, mingled with fierce barking. "Here, Kadour! Here, Kadour!" the low, concentrated, indignant voice of one who seeks to remain concealed and suddenly finds that she is discovered.

Awakened with a start, the lover, disenchanted, found himself in the empty room, beside a table at which no one else was sitting, his lovely dream flown away through the window to the great hillside which filled the whole field of vision and seemed to stoop toward the house. But he really heard the barking of a dog in the adjoining room and repeated blows on the door.

"Open the door. It is I — Jenkins."

Paul sat up on his couch in speechless amazement. Jenkins in that house? How could that be? To whom was he talking? What voice was about to reply to him? There was no reply. A light step walked to the door and the bolt was nervously drawn back.

"At last I have found you," said the Irishman, entering the room.

And in truth, if he had not taken pains to announce himself, Paul, hearing it through the parti-

tion, would never have attributed that brutal, hoarse, savage tone to the oily-mannered doctor.

"At last I have found you, after eight days of searching, of rushing frantically from Genoa to Nice, from Nice to Genoa. I knew that you had n't gone, as the yacht was still in the roads. And I was on the point of investigating all the hotels along the shore when I remembered Bréhat. I thought that you would want to stop and see him as you passed. So I came here. It was he who told me that you were at this house."

To whom was he speaking? What extraordinary obstinacy the person showed in not replying! At last a rich, melancholy voice, which Paul knew well, made the heavy resonant air of the hot afternoon vibrate in its turn.

"Well! yes, Jenkins, here I am. What of it, pray?"

Paul could see through the wall the disdainful, drooping mouth, curled in disgust.

"I have come to prevent you from going, from perpetrating this folly."

"What folly? I have work to do in Tunis. I must go there."

"Why, you can't think of such a thing, my dear child."

"Oh! enough of your paternal airs, Jenkins. I know what is hidden underneath. Pray talk to me as you did just now. I prefer you as the bull-dog, rather than as the fawning cur. I'm less afraid of you."

"Very good! I tell you that you must be mad

to go to that country all alone, young and lovely as you are."

"Why, am I not always alone? Would you have me take Constance, at her age?"

"What about me?"

"You?" She emphasized the word with a most satirical laugh. "And Paris? and your patients? Deprive Paris of its Cagliostro! No, indeed, never!"

"I am thoroughly resolved, however, to follow you wherever you go," said Jenkins, with decision.

There was a moment's pause. Paul wondered if it were very dignified in him to listen to this discussion, which seemed pregnant with terrible disclosures. But, in addition to his fatigue, an unconquerable curiosity glued him to his place. It seemed to him that the engrossing enigma by which he had been so long puzzled and disturbed, to which his mind still held by the end of its veil of mystery, was about to speak at last, to reveal itself, to disclose the woman, sorrowful or perverse, hidden beneath the shell of the worldly artist. So he remained perfectly still, holding his breath, but with no need to listen closely; for the others, believing themselves alone in the hotel, allowed their passions and their voices to rise without restraint.

"After all, what do you want of me?"

"I want you."

"Jenkins!"

"Yes, yes, I know; you have forbidden me ever to utter such words before you; but others than I have said them to you and more too —"

Two nervous steps brought her nearer to the apostle, placed the breathless contempt of her retort close to his broad sensual face.

"And if that were true, villain! If I were unable to defend myself against disgust and ennui, if I did lose my pride, is it for you to mention it? As if you were not the cause of it, as if you had not withered and saddened my life forever."

And three swift, burning words revealed to the horrified Paul de Géry the shocking scene of that assault disguised by loving guardianship, against which the girl's spirit and mind and dreams had had to struggle so long, and which had left her the incurable depression of premature sorrow, a loathing for life almost before it had begun, and that curl at the corner of the lip like the visible wreck of a smile.

"I loved you, — I love you. Passion carries everything before it," Jenkins replied in a hollow voice.

"Very well, love me, if it amuses you. For my part, I hate you, not only because of the injury you have done me and all the beliefs and laudable enthusiasms that you killed in me, but because you represent what are the most execrable and hideous things under the sun to me, hypocrisy and falsehood. Yes, in that worldly masquerade, that mass of false pretences, of grimaces, of cowardly, indecent conventions which have sickened me so thoroughly that I am running away, exiling myself in order to avoid seeing them, that I prefer to them the galleys, the gutter, or to walk the

street as a prostitute, your mask, O sublime Jenkins, is the one that inspires the greatest horror in me. You have complicated our French hypocrisy, which consists mainly in smiles and courtesies, with your effusive English handshakes, your cordial and demonstrative loyalty. Everybody is taken in by it. People speak of 'honest Jenkins,' 'excellent, worthy Jenkins.' But I know you, my man, and for all your fine motto, so insolently displayed on your envelopes, on your seal, your cuff-buttons, your hat-buckles and the panels of your carriages, I always see the knave that you are, showing everywhere around the edges of your disguise."

Her voice hissed between her clenched teeth with an indescribably savage intonation; and Paul expected some frantic outburst on the part of Jenkins, rebelling against such a storm of insults. But no. That exhibition of hatred and contempt on the part of the woman he loved evidently caused him more sorrow than anger; for he answered low, in a tone of heart-broken gentleness: —

"Ah! you are cruel. If you knew how you hurt me! Hypocrite, yes, it is true; but a man is n't born that way, he becomes so perforce, in face of the harsh vicissitudes of life. When you have the wind against you and want to go ahead, you tack. I tacked. Charge it to my miserable beginnings, to an unsuccessful entrance on the stage, and agree at least that one thing in me has never lied: my passion! Nothing has succeeded in repelling it, neither your contempt, nor your in-

sults, nor all that I read in your eyes, which have never once smiled on me in all these years. And it is my passion which gives me strength, even after what I have just heard, to tell you why I am here. Listen. You informed me one day that you needed a husband, some one to watch over you while you were at work, to relieve poor, worn-out Crenmitz from sentry duty. Those were your own words, which tore my heart then because I was not free. Now everything is changed. Will you marry me, Felicia?"

"What about your wife?" cried the girl, while Paul asked himself the same question.

"My wife is dead."

"Dead? Madame Jenkins? Is that true?"

"You never knew the one to whom I refer. The other was not my wife. When I met her, I was already married, in Ireland. Years ago. A horrible marriage, entered into with a rope around my neck. My dear, at twenty-five this alternative was presented to me: imprisonment for debt or Miss Strang, a pimply-faced, gouty old maid, the sister of a money-lender who had advanced me five hundred francs to pay for my medical studies. I preferred the jail; but weeks and months of it exhausted my courage and I married Miss Strang, who brought me as her dowry — my note of hand. You can imagine what my life was between those two monsters who adored each other. A jealous, sterile wife. The brother spying upon me, following me everywhere. I might have fled. But one thing detained me. The money-lender was said

to be enormously rich. I proposed at all events to secure the profits of my cowardice. You see, I tell you everything. However, I was well punished. Old Strang died insolvent; he was a gambler, and had ruined himself without saying a word. Thereupon I placed my wife's rheumatism in an asylum and came to France. I had to begin life anew, to struggle with poverty once more. But I had on my side experience, hatred and contempt for mankind, and freedom, for I did not suspect that the horrible ball and chain of that infernal union would continue to impede my steps at a distance. Luckily it's all over, and I am free at last."

"Yes, Jenkins, free. But why does n't it occur to you to marry the poor creature who has shared your life so long, humble and devoted to you as we have all seen her?"

"Oh!" he said with a burst of sincere feeling, "between my two galleys I believe I preferred the other, where I could show my indifference or my hatred without restraint. But the ghastly comedy of conjugal love, of unwearying happiness, when for so many years I have loved no one but you, thought of no one but you! There's no such torture on earth. If I can judge by my own experience, the poor woman must have shouted with relief and joy when we separated. That is the only farewell greeting I hoped for from her."

"But who forced you to use such restraint."

"Paris, society, the world. Being married according to public opinion, we were bound by it."

"And now you are no longer so bound?"

"Now there is one thing that overshadows everything else, the thought of losing you, of seeing you no more. Oh! when I learned of your flight, when I saw the sign: TO LET, on your door, I felt that the time for poses and grimaces had gone by, that there was nothing for me to do but to pack up and rush after my happiness, which you were carrying away. You left Paris, I did the same. Everything in your house was sold; everything in my house is to be sold."

"And she?" rejoined Felicia, with a shudder. "She, the irreproachable companion, the virtuous woman whom no one has ever suspected, where will she go? what will she do? And you have come to propose to me to take her place? A stolen place, and in what a hell! Aha! And our motto, honest Jenkins, virtuous Jenkins, what are we to do with that? 'Do good without hope,' old man!"

At that sneer, stinging as a blow from a whip, which must have left its mark in red on his face, the wretch rejoined, gasping for breath:

"Enough, enough; do not mock me so. It is too horrible, after all that has gone. In God's name does n't it touch you to be loved as I love you, sacrificing everything to you, wealth, honor, reputation? Come, look at me. However carefully applied my mask may have been, I have torn it off for you, I have torn it off before all the world. And now, look! here is the hypocrite!"

There was a dull sound as of two knees falling

upon the floor. And mad with love, stammering, humbling himself before her, he implored her to consent to marry him, to give him the right to go everywhere with her, to defend her; then words failed him, his voice was choked by a passionate sob, so deep, so heartrending, that it might well have touched any heart, especially in presence of that gorgeous scenery lying impassive in the perfumed, enervating heat. But Felicia was not moved, and her manner was still haughty as she said brusquely: "Enough of this, Jenkins, what you ask is impossible. We have nothing to conceal from each other; and after your confidences of a moment ago, I propose to tell you something which it wounds my pride to tell, but which your persistence seems to me to deserve. I was Mora's mistress."

Paul was not unprepared for that. And yet that sweet voice burdened with such a confession was so sad amid the intoxicating aromas of that lovely blue atmosphere, that his heart was sorely oppressed, and he had in his mouth the taste of tears left by an unavowed regret.

"I knew it," replied Jenkins in a hollow voice. "I have here the letters you wrote him."

"My letters?"

"Oh! I will give them back to you; take them. I know them by heart, by dint of reading and re-reading them. That is the kind of thing that hurts when one is in love. But I have undergone other tortures. When I think that it was I—" he paused, he was suffocating—"I who was

destined to furnish combustion for your flames, to warm that frozen lover, to send him to you, ardent and rejuvenated! Ah! he made away with the pearls, I tell you. It was of no use for me to say no, he always wanted more. At last I went mad. 'You want to burn, villain. Well, burn!'"

Paul sprang to his feet in dismay. Was he about to hear the confession of a crime?

But he had not to undergo the shame of listening further.

A sharp knock, on his door this time, warned him that the *calesino* was ready.

"Hallo! Signor Francese."

There was profound silence in the adjoining room, then a hurried whispering. There was somebody close by, who was listening to them! — Paul de Géry rushed downstairs. He longed to be far away from that hotel parlor, to escape the haunting memory of the horrors that had been disclosed to him.

As the post-chaise started, he saw, between the cheap white curtains that hang at every window in the South, a pale face with the hair of a goddess and great blazing eyes, watching for him to pass. But a glance at Aline's portrait soon banished that disturbing vision, and, cured forever of his former passion, he travelled until evening through an enchanted country with the pretty bride of the breakfast, who carried away in the folds of her modest dress, of her maidenly cloak, all the violets of Bordighera.

Copyright, 1898, by Little, Brown, & Co.

Goupil & Cie Paris

CHAPTER XXV

THE FIRST NIGHT OF "RÉVOLTE."

"READY for the first act!"

That cry from the stage manager, standing, with his hands at his mouth like a trumpet, at the foot of the actors' stairway, soars upward in its lofty well, rolls hither and thither, loses itself in the recesses of passage-ways filled with the noise of closing doors and hurried footsteps, of despairing calls to the wig-maker and the dressers, while on the landings of the different floors, slowly and majestically, holding their heads perfectly still for fear of disarranging the slightest detail of their costumes, all the characters of the first act of *Révolte* appear one by one, clad in elegant modern ball costumes, with much creaking of new shoes, rustling of silk trains, and clanking of handsome bracelets pushed up by the gloves in process of being buttoned. They all seem excited, nervous, pale under their paint, and little shivers pass in waves of shadow over the skilfully prepared velvety flesh of shoulders drenched with white lead. They talk but little, their mouths are dry. The most self-assured, while affecting to

smile, have in their eyes and their voices the hesitation of absent-mindedness, that feeling of apprehension of the battle before the footlights which will always be one of the most potent attractions of the actor's profession, its piquancy, its ever-recurring springtime.

On the crowded stage, where scene-shifters and machinists are running hither and thither, jostling one another in the soft, snowy light from the wings, soon to give place, when the curtain rises, to the brilliant light from the theatre, Cardailhac in black coat and white cravat, his hat cocked over one ear, casts a last glance over the arrangement of the scenery, hastens the workmen, compliments the *ingénue*, humming a tune the while, radiant and superb. To see him, no one would ever suspect the terrible anxieties by which his mind is beset. As he was involved with all the others in the Nabob's downfall, in which his stock company was swallowed up, he is staking his little all on the play to be given this evening, and will be forced — if it does not succeed — to leave this marvellous scenery, these rich stuffs at a hundred francs the yard, unpaid for. His fourth failure is staring him in the face. But, deuce take it! our manager has confidence. Success, like all the monsters that feed on man, loves youth; and this unknown author whose name is entirely new on the posters, flatters the gambler's superstitions.

André Maranne is not so confident. As the time for the performance draws near, he loses faith in his work, dismayed by the sight of the crowded

hall, which he surveys through a hole in the curtain as through the small end of a stereoscope.

A magnificent audience, filling the hall to the ceiling, despite the lateness of the season and the fashionable taste for going early to the country; for Cardailhac, the declared foe of nature and the country, who always struggles to keep Parisians in Paris as late as possible, has succeeded in filling his theatre, in making it as brilliant as in mid-winter. Fifteen hundred heads swarming under the chandeliers, erect, leaning forward, turned aside, questioning, with a great abundance of shadows and reflections; some massed in the dark corners of the pit, others brilliantly illuminated by the reflection of the white walls of the lobby shining through the open doors of the boxes; a first-night audience, always the same, that collective brigand from the theatrical columns of the newspapers, who goes everywhere and carries by assault those much-envied places when some claim to favor or the exercise of some public function does not give them to him.

In the orchestra-stalls, lady-killers, clubmen, glistening craniums with broad bald streaks fringed with scanty hair, light gloves, huge opera-glasses levelled at the boxes. In the galleries, a medley of castes and fine dresses, all the names well known at functions of the sort, and the embarrassing promiscuousness which seats the chaste, modest smile of the virtuous woman beside the eyes blazing with kohl and the lips streaked with vermilion of the other kind. White hats, pink hats, dia-

monds and face paint. Higher up, the boxes present the same scene of confusion: actresses and courtesans, ministers, ambassadors, famous authors, critics solemn of manner and frowning, lying back in their chairs with the impassive gloom of judges beyond the reach of corruption. The proscenium boxes are ablaze with light and splendor, occupied by celebrities of the world of finance, décolletée, bare-armed women, gleaming with jewels like the Queen of Sheba when she visited the King of the Jews. But one of those great boxes on the left is entirely unoccupied, and attracts general attention by its peculiar decoration, lighted by a Moorish lantern at the rear. Over the whole assemblage hovers an impalpable floating dust, the flickering of the gas, which mingles its odor with all Parisian recreations, and its short, sharp wheezing like a consumptive's breath, accompanying the slow waving of fans. And with all the rest, ennui, deathly ennui, the ennui of seeing the same faces always in the same seats, with their affectations or their defects, the monotony of society functions, which results every winter in turning Paris into a backbiting provincial town, more gossipy and narrow-minded than the provinces themselves.

Maranne noticed that sullen humor, that evident weariness on the part of the audience, and as he reflected upon the change that would be wrought by the success of his drama in his modest life, now made up entirely of hopes, he asked himself, in an agony of dread, what he could do to bring his

thoughts home to that multitude of human beings, to force them to lay aside their preoccupied manner, to set in motion in that vast throng a single current which would attract to him those distraught glances, those minds, now scattered over all the notes in the key-board and so difficult to bring into harmony. Instinctively he sought friendly faces, a box opposite the stage filled by the Joyeuse family; Élise and the younger girls in front, and behind them Aline and their father, a lovely family group, like a bouquet dripping with dew in a display of artificial flowers. And while all Paris was asking disdainfully: "Who are those people?" the poet placed his destiny in those little fairy-like hands, newly gloved for the occasion, which would boldly give the signal for applause when it was time.

"Clear the stage!" Maranne has barely time to rush into the wings; and suddenly he hears, far, very far away, the first words of his play, rising, like a flock of frightened birds, in the silence and immensity of the theatre. A terrible moment! Where should he go? What would become of him? Should he remain there leaning against a post, with ears strained and a feeling of tightness at his heart; to encourage the actors when he was so in need of encouragement himself? He prefers to confront the danger face to face, and he glides through a little door into the lobby outside the boxes and stops at a box on the first tier which he opens softly. — "Sh! — it's I." Some one is sitting in the shadow, a woman whom all Paris

knows, and who keeps out of sight. André takes his place beside her, and sitting side by side, invisible to all, the mother and son, trembling with excitement, watch the performance.

The audience was dumbfounded at first. The Théâtre des Nouveautés, situated at the heart of the boulevard, where its main entrance was a blaze of light, among the fashionable restaurants and select clubs, — a theatre to which small parties used to adjourn after a choice dinner to hear an act or two of something racy, had become in the hands of its clever manager the most popular of all Parisian play-houses, with no well-defined speciality but providing a little of all sorts, from the spectacular fairy-play which exhibits the women in scant attire, to the great modern drama which does the same for our morals. Cardailhac was especially bent upon justifying his title of "manager of the Nouveautés,"[1] and since the Nabob's millions had been behind the undertaking, he had striven to give the frequenters of the boulevard some dazzling surprises. That of this evening surpassed them all: the play was in verse — and virtuous.

A virtuous play!

The old monkey had realized that the time had come to try that *coup*, and he tried it. After the first moments of amazement, and a few melancholy ejaculations here and there in the boxes: "Listen! it's in verse!" the audience began to feel the charm of that elevating, healthy work, as if some-

[1] Novelties.

one had shaken over it, in that rarefied atmosphere, some cool essence, pleasant to inhale, an elixir of life perfumed with the wild thyme of the hillsides.

"Ah! this is fine — it is restful."

That was the general exclamation, a thrill of comfort, a bleat of satisfaction accompanying each line. It was restful to the corpulent Hemerlingue, puffing in his proscenium box on the ground floor, as in a sty of cherry-colored satin. It was restful to tall Suzanne Bloch, in her antique head-dress with crimps peeping out from under a diadem of gold; and Amy Férat beside her, all in white like a bride, sprigs of orange-blossoms in her hair dressed *à la chien*, it was restful to her, too.

There were numbers of such creatures there, some very stout with an unhealthy stoutness picked up in all sorts of seraglios, triple-chinned and with an idiotic look; others absolutely green despite their rouge, as if they had been dipped in a bath of that arsenite of copper known to commerce as "Paris green," so faded and wrinkled that they kept out of sight in the back of their boxes, letting nothing be seen save a bit of white arm or a still shapely shoulder. Then there were old beaux, limp and stooping, of the type then known as little *crevés*, with protruding neck and hanging lips, incapable of standing straight, or of uttering a word without a break. And all these people exclaimed as one man: "This is fine — it is restful." Beau Moëssard hummed it like a tune under his little blond moustache, while his queen

in a first tier box opposite translated it into her barbarous foreign tongue. Really it was restful to them. But they did not say why they needed rest, from what heart-sickening toil, from what enforced task as idlers and utterly useless creatures.

All these well-disposed murmurs, confused and blended, began to give the theatre the aspect that it wore on great occasions. Success was in the air, faces became brighter, the women seemed embellished by the reflection of the prevailing enthusiasm, of glances as thrilling as applause. André, sitting beside his mother, thrilled with an unfamiliar pleasure, with that proud delight which one feels in stirring the emotions of a crowd, even though it be as a street-singer in the faubourgs, with a patriotic refrain and two tremulous notes in one's voice. Suddenly the whispering redoubled, changed into a tumult. People began to move about and laugh sneeringly. What was happening? Some accident on the stage? André, leaning forward in dismay toward his actors, who were no less surprised than himself, saw that all the opera-glasses were levelled at the large proscenium box, empty until then, which some one had just entered and had taken his seat there, both elbows on the velvet rail, opera-glass in hand, in ominous solitude.

The Nabob had grown twenty years older in ten days. Those impulsive Southern natures, rich as they are in enthusiastic outbursts, in irresistible spurts of flame, collapse more utterly than others. Since his rejection by the Chamber the poor fel-

low had remained shut up in his own room, with the curtains drawn, refusing to see the daylight or to cross the threshold beyond which life awaited him, engagements he had entered into, promises made, a wilderness of protests and summonses. The Levantine having gone to some watering-place, attended by her masseur and her negresses, absolutely indifferent to the ruin of the family, — Bompain, the man in the fez, aghast amid the constant demands for money, being utterly at a loss to know how to approach his unfortunate employer, who was always in bed and turned his face to the wall as soon as any one mentioned business to him, — the old mother was left alone to struggle with the disaster, with the limited, guileless knowledge of a village widow, who knows what a stamped paper is, and a signature, and who considers honor the most precious possession on earth. Her yellow cap appeared on every floor of the great mansion, overlooking the bills, introducing reforms among the servants, heedless of outcries and humiliations. At every hour in the day the good woman could be seen striding along Place Vendôme, gesticulating, talking to herself, saying aloud: "Bah! I'll go and see the bailiff." And she never consulted her son except when it was indispensable, and then only in a few concise words, careful to avoid looking at him. To arouse Jansoulet from his torpor nothing less would suffice than a despatch from Paul de Géry at Marseille, announcing his arrival with ten millions. Ten millions, that is to say, failure averted,

a possibility of standing erect once more, of beginning life anew. And behold our Southerner, rebounding from the depths to which he had fallen, drunk with joy and hope. He ordered the windows to be thrown open, newspapers to be brought. What a magnificent opportunity that first night of *Révolte* would afford him to show himself to the Parisians, who believed that he had gone under, to re-enter the great eddying whirlpool through the folding doors of his box at the Nouveautés! His mother, warned by an instinctive dread, made a slight effort to hold him back. Paris terrified her now. She would have liked to take her child away to some secluded corner in the South, to care for him with the Elder, both ill with the disease of the great city. But he was the master. It was impossible to resist the will of that man whom wealth had spoiled. She helped him to dress, "made him handsome," as she laughingly said, and watched him not without a certain pride as he left the house, superb, revivified, almost recovered from the terrible prostration of the last few days.

Jansoulet quickly remarked the sensation caused by his presence in the theatre. Being accustomed to such exhibitions of curiosity, he usually responded to them without the least embarrassment, with his kindly, expansive smile; but this time the manifestation was unfriendly, almost insulting.

"What! — is that he?"

"There he is!"

"What impudence!"

Such exclamations went up from the orchestra stalls, mingled with many others. The seclusion and retirement in which he had taken refuge for the past few days had left him in ignorance of the public exasperation in his regard, the sermons, the dithyrambs with which the newspapers were filled on the subject of his corrupting wealth, articles written for effect, hypocritical verbiage to which public opinion resorts from time to time to revenge itself on the innocent for all its concessions to the guilty. It was a terrible disappointment, which caused him at first more pain than anger. Deeply moved, he concealed his distress behind his opera-glass, turning three-fourths away from the audience and giving close attention to the slightest details of the performance, but unable to avoid the scandalized scrutiny of which he was the victim, and which made his ears ring, his temples throb, and covered the dimmed lenses of his opera-glass with multi-colored circles, whirling about in the first vagaries of apoplexy.

When the act came to an end and the curtain fell, he remained, without moving, in that embarrassed attitude; but the louder whispering, no longer restrained by the stage dialogue, and the persistency of certain curious persons who changed their seats in order to obtain a better view of him, compelled him to leave his box, to rush out into the lobby like a wild beast fleeing from the arena through the circus.

Under the low ceiling, in the narrow circular

passage common in theatre lobbies, he stumbled upon a compact crowd of dandies, newspaper men, women in gorgeous hats, tightly laced, laughers by trade, shrieking with idiotic laughter as they leaned against the wall. From the open boxes, which sought a breath of fresh air from that swarming, noisy corridor, issued broken, confused fragments of conversation:

"A delightful play. It is so fresh and clean!"

"That Nabob! What insolence!"

"Yes, it really is very restful. One feels the better for—"

"How is it he has n't been arrested yet?"

"A very young man, it seems; this is his first play."

"Bois-Héry at Mazas!—It is n't possible. There 's the marchioness just opposite us in the first gallery, with a new hat."

"What does that prove? She 's plying her trade of *lanceuse*. That 's a very pretty hat, by the way—the colors of Desgranges' horse."

"And Jenkins? What has become of Jenkins?"

"At Tunis with Felicia. Old Brahim saw them both. It seems that the bey has taken a decided liking to the pearls."

"*Bigre!*"

Farther on, sweet voices whispered:

"Go, father, do go. See how entirely alone he is, poor man."

"But I don't know him, children."

"Even so, just a bow. Something to show him that he is n't utterly abandoned."

Whereupon a little old gentleman, in a white cravat, with a very red face, darted to meet the Nabob and saluted him with a respectful flourish of his hat. How gratefully, with what an eager, pleasant smile, was that single salutation returned, that salutation from a man whom Jansoulet did not know, whom he had never seen, but who, nevertheless, exerted a very great influence upon his destiny; for, except for Père Joyeuse, the president of the council of the *Territoriale* would probably have shared the fate of the Marquis de Bois-l'Héry. So it is that in the network of modern society, that vast labyrinth of selfish interests, ambitions, services accepted and rendered, all castes communicate between themselves, mysteriously connected by hidden bonds, from the most elevated to the humblest existences; therein lies the explanation of the variegated coloring, the complication of this study of manners, the assemblage of scattered threads of which the writer with a regard for truth is compelled to make the groundwork of his drama.

Glances cast vaguely into the air, steps turned aimlessly aside, hats pulled abruptly over the eyes, in ten minutes the Nabob was subjected to all the outward manifestations of that terrible ostracism of Parisian society, where he had neither kindred nor substantial connections of any sort, and where contempt isolated him more surely than respect isolates a sovereign when paying a visit. He staggered with embarrassment and shame. Some one said aloud: "He has been drinking," and all that

the poor man could do was to go back into the salon of his box and close the door. Ordinarily that little *retiro* was filled during the entr'actes with financiers and journalists. They laughed and talked and smoked there, making a great uproar; the manager always came to pay his respects to his partner. That evening, not a soul. And the absence of Cardailhac, with his keen scent for success, showed Jansoulet the full measure of his disgrace.

"What have I done to them? Why is it that Paris will no longer have anything to do with me?"

He questioned himself thus in a solitude which was emphasized by the sounds all about, the sudden turning of keys in the doors of boxes, the innumerable exclamations of an amused crowd. Then suddenly the newness of his luxurious surroundings, the odd shadows cast by the Moorish lantern on the brilliant silk covering of the couch and the hangings reminded him of the date of his arrival. Six months! Only six months since he arrived in Paris! Everything consumed and vanished in six months! He relapsed into a sort of torpor from which he was aroused by enthusiastic applause and bravos. Clearly this play of *Révolte* was a great success. They had now reached the powerful, satirical passages; and the virulent declamation, a little emphatic in tone but relieved by a breath of youth and sincerity, made every heart beat fast after the idyllic effusions of the first act. Jansoulet determined to look and listen with the rest. After all, the theatre belonged to him.

His seat in that proscenium box had cost him more than a million; surely the least he was entitled to was the privilege of occupying it.

Behold him seated once more at the front of his box. In the hall a heavy, suffocating heat, stirred but not dissipated by the waving fans, their glittering spangles mingling their reflections with the impalpable outbreathings of the silence. The audience listened intently to an indignant and spirited passage against the pirates, so numerous at that period, who had become cocks of the roost after long haunting the darkest corners to rob all who passed. Certainly Maranne, when he wrote those fine lines, had had nobody less in his mind than the Nabob. But the audience saw in them an allusion to him; and while a triple salvo of applause greeted the end of the tirade, all eyes were turned toward the box on the left, with an indignant, openly insulting movement. The poor wretch, pilloried in his own theatre! A pillory that had cost him so dear! That time he did not seek to avoid the affront, but settled himself resolutely on his seat, with folded arms, and defied that crowd, which stared at him with its hundreds of upturned, sneering faces, that virtuous All-Paris which took him for a scapegoat and drove him forth after loading all its crimes upon him.

A pretty assemblage, in sooth, for such an exhibition! Opposite, the box of an insolvent banker, the wife and the lover side by side in front, the husband in the shadow, neglected and grave. At one side the frequent combination of a mother

who has married her daughter according to her (the mother's) own heart, and to make the man she loved her son-in-law. Contraband couples too, courtesans flaunting the price of their shame, diamonds in circlets of flame riveted around arms and necks like dog-collars, stuffing themselves with bonbons, which they swallowed in gluttonous, beastly fashion because an exhibition of the animal nature in woman pleases those who pay for it. And those groups of effeminate fops, with low collars and painted eyebrows, whose embroidered lawn shirts and white satin corsets aroused admiration in the guest chambers at Compiègne; *mignons* of Agrippa's day, who called one another: "My heart," or "My dear love." Scandal and wickedness in every form, consciences sold or for sale, the vice of an epoch devoid of grandeur or originality, attempting to copy the freaks of all other epochs, and contributing to the Jardin Bullier that duchess, the wife of a minister of state, who rivalled the most shameless dancers of that resort. And they were the people who turned their back upon him, who cried out to him: "Begone! You are unworthy."

"I unworthy! Why, I am worth a hundred times more than the whole of you, vile wretches! You reproach me with my millions. In God's name, who helped me squander them? — Look you, you cowardly, treacherous friend, hiding in the corner of your box your fat carcass like a sick pasha's! I made your fortune as well as my own in the days when we shared everything like brothers. — And

you, sallow-faced marquis, I paid a hundred thousand francs at the club to prevent your being expelled in disgrace. — I covered you with jewels, you hussy, so letting people think you were my mistress, because that is good form in our circle, and never asked you for anything in return. — And you, brazen-faced journalist, with no other brains than the dregs of your inkstand, and with as many leprous spots on your conscience as your queen has on her skin, you consider that I did n't pay you what you were worth, and that 's the secret of your insults. — Yes, yes, look at me, *canaille!* I am proud. I am better than you."

All that he said thus to himself, in a frenzy of wrath, visible in the trembling of his thick, pallid lips, the unhappy man, upon whom madness was swooping down, was, perhaps, on the point of shouting aloud in the silence, of pouring out a flood of maledictions upon that insulting mob, and, who can say? of leaping down into the midst of them and killing some one, ah! God's blood! of killing some one, when he felt a light touch on his shoulder; and he saw a blond head, a frank, grave face, and two outstretched hands which he grasped convulsively, like a drowning man.

"Ah! my dear — my dear — " stammered the poor man. But he had no strength to say more. That grateful emotion coming upon him in the midst of his frenzy, melted it into a sob of tears, of blood, of choking speech. His face became purple. He motioned: "Take me away." And, leaning on Paul de Géry's arm, he stumbled

through the door of his box and fell to the floor in the lobby.

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted the audience at the conclusion of the actor's tirade; and there was a noise as of a hail-storm, an enthusiastic stamping, — while the great inert body, borne by scene-shifters, passed through the brilliantly-lighted wings, obstructed by men and women crowding around the entrances to the stage, excited by the atmosphere of success, and hardly noticing the passage of that lifeless victim carried in men's arms like the victim of a street affray. They laid him on a couch in the property room, Paul de Géry by his side with a physician and two attendants who were eager to help. Cardailhac, who was very busy with the performance, had promised to come and see how he was getting on, "in a moment, after the fifth act."

Bloodletting upon bloodletting, cupping, plasters, nothing produced even a twitching of the skin in the sick man, who was insensible to all the methods of resuscitation usually resorted to in cases of apoplexy. A relaxation of every fibre of his being seemed to give him over to death, to prepare his body for the rigidity of the corpse; and that in the most dismal place on earth, chaos lighted by a dark lantern, where all the débris of plays that had been performed, gilded furniture, hangings with gorgeous fringe, carriages, strong boxes, card-tables, discarded flights of stairs and banisters, were heaped together pell-mell under the dust, among ropes and pulleys, a wilderness of damaged,

broken, demolished, cast-off stage properties. Bernard Jansoulet, as he lay amid that wreckage, his shirt torn away from his chest, at once bleeding and bloodless, was the typical shipwrecked victim of life, bruised and cast ashore with the pitiable débris of his artificial splendor broken and scattered by the Parisian whirlpool. Paul, broken-hearted, gazed sadly at that face with its short nose, retaining in its inert condition the wrathful yet kindly expression of an inoffensive creature who tried to defend himself before dying, but had no time to bite. He blamed himself for his inability to serve him to any useful purpose. What had become of that fine project of his of leading Jansoulet through the quagmires, of saving him from ambuscades? All that he had been able to do was to rescue a few millions, and even those came too late.

The windows were opened on the balcony overlooking the boulevard, then at its full tide of noise and animation, and blazing with light. The theatre was surrounded with rows of gas-jets, a circle of flame lighting up the most obscure recesses where flickering lanterns gleamed like stars travelling through the dark sky. The play was done. The audience was leaving the theatre. The dark throng moved in a compact mass down the steps and scattered to right and left along the white sidewalks, to spread through the city the news of a great success and the name of an unknown author, who would be illustrious and famous on

the morrow. A most enjoyable evening, causing the restaurant windows to blaze with delight and the streets to be filled with long lines of belated carriages. That holiday uproar, of which the poor Nabob had been so fond and which was well adapted to the giddy whirl of his existence, aroused him for a second. His lips moved, and his staring eyes, turned toward de Géry, assumed in presence of death a sorrowful, imploring, rebellious expression, as if to call upon him to bear witness to one of the greatest, the most cruel acts of injustice that Paris ever committed.

THE END.

ALPHONSE
DAUDET
VOLUME II
LIMITED EDITION

THE

Stanford University Libraries
3 6105 001 324 081

PQ
2216
A2
1898
v.2

Stanford University Libraries
Stanford, California

Return this book on or before date due.

JUN 1987